



# THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

EDITED BY

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## EDITORIAL PREFACE

THE writers of this series of volumes on the variant forms of religious life in India are governed in their work by two impelling motives.

I. They endeavour to work in the sincere and sympathetic spirit of science. They desire to understand the perplexingly involved developments of thought and life in India and dispassionately to estimate their value. They recognize the futility of any such attempt to understand and evaluate, unless it is grounded in a thorough historical study of the phenomena investigated. In recognizing this fact they do no more than share what is common ground among all modern students of religion of any repute. But they also believe that it is necessary to set the practical side of each system in living relation to the beliefs and the literature, and that, in this regard, the close and direct contact which they have each had with Indian religious life ought to prove a source of valuable light. For, until a clear understanding has been gained of the practical influence exerted by the habits of worship, by the practice of the ascetic, devotional, or occult discipline, by the social organization and by the family system, the real impact of the faith upon the life of the individual and the community cannot be estimated; and, without the advantage of extended personal intercourse, a trustworthy account of the religious experience of a community can scarcely be achieved by even the most careful student.

II. They seek to set each form of Indian religion by the side of Christianity in such a way that the relationship may stand out clear. Jesus Christ has become to them the light of



all their seeing, and they believe Him destined to be the light of the world. They are persuaded that sooner or later the age-long quest of the Indian spirit for religious truth and power will find in Him at once its goal and a new starting-point, and they will be content if the preparation of this series contributes in the smallest degree to hasten this consummation. If there be readers to whom this motive is unwelcome, they may be reminded that no man approaches the study of a religion without religious convictions, either positive or negative: for both reader and writer, therefore, it is better that these should be explicitly stated at the outset. Moreover, even a complete lack of sympathy with the motive here acknowledged need not diminish a reader's interest in following an honest and careful attempt to bring the religions of India into comparison with the religion which to-day is their only possible rival, and to which they largely owe their present noticeable and significant revival.

It is possible that to some minds there may seem to be a measure of incompatibility between these two motives. The writers, however, feel otherwise. For them the second motive reinforces the first: for they have found that he who would lead others into a new faith must first of all understand the faith that is theirs already—understand it, moreover, sympathetically, with a mind quick to note not its weaknesses alone but that in it which has enabled it to survive and has given it its power over the hearts of those who profess it.

The duty of the Editors of the series is limited to seeing that the volumes are in general harmony with the principles here described. Each writer is alone responsible for the opinions expressed in his volume, whether in regard to Indian religions or to Christianity.

THE RELIGIOUS QUEST OF INDIA

THE RITES

OF THE TWICE-BORN

BY

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'FIRST STEPS IN GUJARĀTĪ'

*WITH FOREWORD*

BY

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TO THE TWO GALLANT BROTHERS,  
LIEUT. C. H. B. ADAMS-WYLIE, I.M.S.  
(DIED AT BLOEMFONTEIN, 1900), AND  
SAPPER A. W. HAMILTON ADAMS,  
CANADIAN ENGINEERS (DIED NEAR  
MERVILLE, 1915), WHO WERE HER  
EARLIEST CRITICS AND HER FIRST  
REVIEWERS, THEIR SISTER DEDICATES  
THIS BOOK



## FOREWORD

IT is with peculiar pleasure that I write the following lines as a foreword to this volume, because both Mrs. Stevenson and her husband assiduously studied Sanskrit with me several years ago at Oxford. An adequate knowledge of the sacred language of the Brāhmans is a necessary basis for a trustworthy exposition of the life of the caste which committed its ritual rules to writing in the Sanskrit Sūtra literature more than 2,000 years ago, and which has adhered to them as there formulated with comparatively little modification down to the present time. As the daily life of the Hindus from the cradle to the grave is interpenetrated with religious practices more closely than that of any other people in the world, the mass of material involved in a description of their ceremonial is very great. Mrs. Stevenson has enjoyed the advantage of collecting this material through direct and continuous association with Brāhmans during a residence of a good many years in a part of India where old traditions have been particularly well preserved. She has consequently been able to handle her subject with a first-hand knowledge denied to most other writers who generally derive their information from books only. She has, moreover, adopted the doubly excellent plan of restricting her account to a single region of India and of submitting what she has written for correction to those who themselves practise the rites she describes. Otherwise, owing to the numerous divergencies in detail of Brāhmanical ceremonies in different parts of India, her statement, as being too general, would have been, on the one hand, liable to frequent criticism and contradiction,

and on the other might have been on her part inaccurate or misleading because of the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the facts observed. It is to be hoped that others possessing the necessary equipment and prolonged opportunities of study on the spot will in different parts of the country follow Mrs. Stevenson's methods, and supply the student of Indian religions with new and well-attested data from every region of the peninsula.

The subject-matter of the book is distributed in three parts. The first deals with the epochs in a Brāhman's life : birth, investiture with the sacred thread, betrothal, marriage, and death, together with the beliefs, practices, and ceremonies connected with the main periods of his career, such as rites performed in infancy, the importance of a son, funeral offerings, the punishments in future existences of sins committed in this life, the widow's lot, and other matters. The second part is concerned with times and seasons in so far as they are connected with the ritual of the Brāhman's day, of the days of the week, the month, and the year ; and with occasional rites and observances associated with the building of houses, the digging of wells, and with pilgrimages, sacred hills and rivers. The last part describes the worship of the two great gods Viṣṇu and Śiva, together with the ceremonies performed in their temples. It also treats of the practices of ascetics.

The book, concluding with a comparison of the outlook of Hinduism and Christianity, discusses the appeal which the latter makes to the increasing number of thinking men among the Twice-born as a substitute for a system which no longer satisfies their religious cravings. The author writes in an attractive style, holding the attention by comparing now and then Hindu with European ideas and customs, and by interspersing humorous criticisms, but always in a kindly spirit. She uniformly treats her subject with both insight and sym-

## FOREWORD

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pathy. Especially important, I think, is her discussion of the doctrine of Karma. While admitting its value as a moral check, she indicates its paralysing influence and its evil effects, such as the arrogance of the Brāhman, the sad fate of the child widow, and the wretched plight of the low-caste man and the pariah.

A perusal of the book will show that the large mass of ritual matter it contains is permeated with innumerable superstitions and primitive usages which, inherited from a remote past, hinder the progress of Indian civilization at the present day. It will therefore appeal not only to the student of religions, but to the anthropologist and the social reformer. It is a notable contribution to the armoury of those who are fighting in the war of liberation of the human race.

A. A. MACDONELL.





## PREFACE

IN some lovely upland valley in Switzerland the traveller may notice a lonely cross, raised, as any friendly peasant will tell him, in memory of a mission that had once been held there, and so reminding the careless passer-by that in this quiet place, perhaps years ago, simple folk had knelt and caught glimpses of the Eternal.

One would like to mark the beginning of a book like this with some such symbol, for we are to study in it rites and ceremonies in which a people, alien though they be in race and creed, have also sought after the Divine ; and the reader would do well to remove the shoes from off his feet, remembering that the ground he will be treading is hallowed.

One would fain reproduce the atmosphere in which the facts recorded here were told, and introduce to the sympathetic student the beautiful Indian women with their Madonna-like faces, who welcomed the writer so prettily into their homes and confided to her their domestic rites—the fifth Veda, as the Brāhmans call it, of the woman's knowledge ; the simple country Brāhmans who gathered round our tents as we toured, and told us all that they knew ; and the courteous officiants met on early morning or twilight visits to city or village temples. From all these the writer gathered much scattered information, none of which, however, she dared to use, till it had been sifted and collated by three Brāhman paṇḍits. Morning after morning she and they sat together on a quiet sunlit veranda whilst they lectured, explained, and dictated ; and no fact has been recorded without the consent of all three.

Proud as the writer is of the two great schools where she herself studied, she never met there or elsewhere better or finer patience and accuracy in teaching than these three Indian schoolmasters showed. Her oldest friend amongst these paṇḍits, a Nāgara by caste and the head master of a High School, represented the modern outlook; the other two knew no English: one of them, an Audīca Brāhman, was one of the most learned Śāstris and Sanskrit scholars of the district, and the other, a Sārasvata Brāhman, possessed an unrivalled knowledge of the folk-lore and the legends of the people. All three had that real love of imparting knowledge which marks the born teacher. Over and over again they would describe a custom till they were certain that the writer had gripped the salient points, then she translated to them her notes as she took them down, and these they checked with lynx-eyed scrupulousness. 'Shall we let people in England', they would say, 'think that we taught the Madam Sāhib things untrue?' And later the whole book woven out of these notes was retranslated to them and altered and altered again, till even they at last were satisfied. Customs vary so much in every district in India, that the writer dare not hope that these descriptions will hold good in every detail for any very extensive stretch of country; but for the town in which she wrote, the three paṇḍits accepted this final account as accurate.

The object of this book, however, is to stimulate rather than to instruct, not to provide an encyclopaedia of ritual Hinduism, but to furnish a beginner with pigeon-holes wherein he may range the facts he himself gathers, and with pegs from which he may take down the ready-made garments the writer has provided, hanging up in their stead the fruits of his own toil.

For such a purpose the local variations of custom will prove a help rather than a hindrance; for, after all, one of the strongest instincts of mankind the wide world over is to contradict. Let

the beginner read over these pages with his own paṇḍit, and he will at once be supplied with a flood of corrections, amplifications, and alterations, from which he will be able to fashion that most valuable of all books on Comparative Religion, a personal record of a faith based on personal friendship.

The writer has called her book *The Rites of the Twice-born*, but the subject is not, of course, exhausted in these pages. Indeed, she has deliberately excluded much material, for fear of obscuring the norm by an overweight of details, and so hiding the wood by the trees; but the beginner would find it most useful to work over these rites with a Brāhman who is not a follower of Śiva, as was each of her three paṇḍits, but of Viṣṇu, or else with members of the other Twice-born castes who are not Brāhmanas at all,<sup>1</sup> and record for himself the divergencies.

What the writer has attempted to do is to furnish the man or woman newly landed in India with some clue that may help him in beginning to study the faith of his fellow-citizens, and the earlier this ready-made clue can be discarded, the sooner will one at least of her purposes be fulfilled.

The Indian distrusts a certain type of self-styled anthropologist who, as it seems to him, looks on an alien creed merely as material from which to fill a sort of museum; and one day one of her paṇḍits said:—‘Madam Sāhib, these are our sacred things that we are telling you, and we are willing to tell you personally of them, but will the people who read the book also study them with reverence?’ In reply she could only urge that, charm she never so wisely, the incurably frivolous, to whom nothing is sacred, would never dream of reading a book of this nature; and, for the rest, promise that at the very

<sup>1</sup> The term Twice-born—*Dvija*—includes, of course, besides the Brāhmanas, the members of the ancient Vaiśya and Kṣatriya castes, who, like the Brāhmanas, originally passed through the Second Birth wrought by the bestowal of the sacred thread.

beginning she would ask the reader to remember that he was entering the precincts of a shrine.

There are three great Paths, any one of which a Brāhman may elect to follow who wishes to find Rest :—the Way of Works ;<sup>1</sup> the Way of Faith and Devotion ;<sup>2</sup> and the Way of Knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

In this book it is the first, the Way of Works, that we are to study. Much more has been written about the other paths ; about the Way of Devotion with its all-absorbing and utter consecration to a Deity—a path which leads at times as high as Heaven, and at others falls as low as Hell—and the Way of High Philosophy, the intricacy of whose labyrinths, and the delicacy of whose filaments have passed into a proverb. But in this book we have chosen the humblest of all the paths, a Way that at its highest never leads its followers to complete Liberation, but only to the passing bliss of a Heaven which he will one day have to leave again. It is, however, the road that most of the simple folk—the ordinary people—amongst the Twice-born are treading ; the Way of Rites and Ceremonies, whose due performance every day, and at birth, marriage, death, and the great festivals, takes up a third of their lives. It is essentially the Woman's Way, and so it seemed particularly to invite a woman to investigate it, for much of it is barred against the research of the mere man.

Over and over again, as she studied, the writer proved the advantage of being, not only a woman, but a missionary ; for the very fact of that vocation ensured that the researcher and the worshipper were looking at things from the same point of view, that of the things which are not seen but are eternal ; and, thanks to the noble tradition left by the great missionaries of the past, that fact also assured the shyest Indian that she brought sympathy and reverence to the study of his faith.

<sup>1</sup> Karma-mārga.

<sup>2</sup> Bhakti-mārga.

<sup>3</sup> Jñāna-mārga.

The Way of Works may be the humblest of the three great paths, but in some respects it is the most satisfactory for a beginner to study. There are in it actual things that are performed and can be seen and inquired into, and which demand from their observer no adhesion to this or that passing theory, but only a feeling for concrete facts. And, when one comes to writing it all down, there is great solace in the thought that one may say it quite simply, since, 'when a man has facts, he need not stop to be clever'.

It is, however, impossible to write a book of this sort without the co-operation of many friends; and besides thanking the two editors of the Series for all their help and encouragement, the writer owes a special debt of gratitude to the late Rev. Dr. G. P. Taylor, the scholar-saint of Western India, who first directed her attention to the study of Indian religions, and whose death, whilst these pages that he had so carefully read and weighed were passing through the press, has bereft us of a fragrant example of godliness, old-world courtesy, and sound learning. Then she would like to thank Dr. A. A. Macdonell, who has not only written a foreword to the book, but also made time, in spite of the urgent pressure of other work, to read through the whole of the proof; and lastly her husband, who discussed every paragraph with her while the book was growing and later undertook the work of indexing and proof-correcting.

That such busy men could find so much time to be kind will always be to the writer a very gracious memory.

MARGARET STEVENSON

*St. Columba's Day,*  
1920.



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### CHAPTER I

#### BIRTH AND BABYHOOD

Precautions — Preparations — Remedies — Telling the Good News — Only a Girl — In the Birth-chamber — The Food of Mother and Child — Birthday Superstitions — Calling — Mother Sixth — The Tenth Day — The Eleventh Day — The Twelfth Day — The Name-giving — Choice of the Name — Twentieth Day — Thirtieth Day — Beholding the Sun — Fetching Water — The First Holi — The Weaning — Seating on the Ground — Cutting the Hair — Ear-boring — Teething — Sending to School — Birthday Anniversaries.

EVERY fresh chapter in a Hindu's life depends so inextricably on the preceding chapters, and together they form so complete a circle, that his life-history seems to have no beginning and no ending; and for a moment or two the observer stands outside the circumference, wondering where he shall break in, since, start where he will, he must snap off some of the threads which unite the present with the past. But, since he must start somewhere, it seems natural to begin a life-history at the birth and later return to pick up some of the unravelled threads.

In many parts of India a woman prefers to go back to her old home for the birth of her first child. There she is guarded in the most careful fashion from every evil, spiritual or physical, that might affect her body or her soul. Not only may she do no hard housework, for fear it should tire her, but she must do no sewing, or anything else that binds things together: for instance, she must not close up the outlet of the great grain jar, or replaster the hearth.

A special chamber is prepared for her, a dark little room, generally rather apart from the rest of the house, and every window in it is carefully closed and shuttered. The bedstead is stripped of its tapes, and string substituted, on some auspicious day, the fourth, ninth, or fourteenth day of the month being carefully avoided. Great care is taken that the bedstead should not lie exactly under the great beam that holds the house together, since some Hindus think that the god of death perches on this; neither should the bed face the south, as that is the abode of the god of death.

When her hour has come, the expectant mother, accompanied by her own mother and the midwife, enter this room, and they loosen everything that they can: her camisole, the cord that ties her skirt, her shawl-like overdress (*sārī*) and her hair, carefully preserving the string that has bound the last named.

The midwife may belong to the caste of midwives (*Suyāñī*), or may be a Khavāsa, a Rājput, or even a Muḥammadan, but is generally a barber's wife.

If the mother's suffering be unduly prolonged, her friends will break open the mouth of the great grain jar and let the corn stream out, or dig up the beplastered hearth, or (if they can procure one) put a lotus flower in water, believing that, as its petals expand, the mouth of the womb will open; or, turning to their gods for aid, they will worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or Nakalañka, or whichever god is their tutelary deity (*Iṣṭādeva*), and promise to give sugar, to break a coco-nut and distribute it, to feast Brāhmans, or to give a silver model of an umbrella to some temple when the child is safely born; or they may draw seven circles, each within the other, representing the seven forts mentioned in the Mahābhārat through which Abhimanyu forced his way, and soak the diagram in water, which they then give to the woman to drink. If the midwife be a Muḥammadan, she will very likely vow a coco-nut to Dātāra Pīra in Junāgaḍh, and when the child is born, she will beg the coco-nut from its grandparents and take it home. She

will, however, avoid the trouble of an actual journey to Junāgadh by just pronouncing the name of Dātāra Pīra over the nut as she breaks it. Some of the nut she will distribute amongst the village children, taking care, however, to keep a good deal of it for her own use ; so that altogether this vow of the midwife's to Dātāra Pīra does not cost her very much.

On the other hand, leaving spiritual methods on one side, the midwife may turn to medical remedies : tearing down the cobweb of a spider, she will roll it into a ball, put cloves in it and place it in the mouth of the womb ; or she may try the effect of heat, putting fennel seed on a brazier and letting the smoke play on the patient as she sits over it.

Heat occupies an important place in an Indian confinement, for, an hour and a half after the child is born, a brazier of charcoal is put under the mother's bedstead and kept burning for ten days, so that the suffocating atmosphere of a birth-chamber, with every window closed, on a stifling Indian day can be better imagined than described.

The exact moment when the child is born is noted with the most meticulous care, in order that the horoscope may later be correctly drawn by an astrologer, for this horoscope will be the determining factor in the child's life, deciding its spouse, its wedding, and its profession.

Occasionally the midwife throws a lime under the door to tell the good news that a son is born, the sourness of the fruit safeguarding the happiness of the hour.

If the child be a boy, the midwife with a wooden mallet strikes the brass plate that she has previously taken into the birth-chamber and makes an appalling row, in order that the boy may learn never to fear or jump even at the sound of a gun in later life ; but no gong is sounded if the baby is only a girl. The moment the joyful sound is heard that tells of a boy's advent, the children of the house rush to the male members of the family and torment them, till they are appeased by the gift of one or two rupees ; then, if the proud father's house be in the same town, they hurry on there and



get much more out of him. The telling of the good news of the birth of a son is called *Vadhāmanī*, and any woman missionary will tell how pretty and eager a listening she gains from the women of the village when she tells them she has come to bring them the *Vadhāmanī* which once the angels sang at Bethlehem.

If the wee baby be only a girl, the rejoicings are quite different; for though, after one or two sons have been born, the parents welcome a daughter, most Indians hope that their first-born will be a son. Still, even if the first child be a girl, they say 'Lakṣmī has come', so that in either case the advent of the first child is considered an auspicious event. The desire for a son is not only the longing for an heir to inherit their property and carry on their name, or the natural desire of most parents to have the pleasure and pride of watching their boy's successful career; it is something that grips them far more vitally and harrowingly than that, for only a son can save his father's soul from hell by performing the funeral ceremonies, and only the birth of a son can secure his mother from the fear that another wife may be brought in to share with her her husband's affections.<sup>1</sup>

While it is true that, on account of the expense entailed, several daughters are not welcomed, yet it is believed that one daughter, when she is married, brings her parents as much merit as the performance of a great sacrifice; the great advantage of a marriage ceremony being, as we shall see later, that it combines endless fun with the chance of acquiring religious merit, and it is in the girl's house that the best of the fun takes place.

So the children of the house are determined to make hay, even if it be only a daughter that has been born, and they still go to beg from their uncles and elders, though in such a case they can only hope for annas instead of rupees.

<sup>1</sup> Some Nāgara women, however, are saved from this fear, since, in many districts at least, a Nāgara will not remarry during his wife's lifetime, even if no son be born.

The young mother at this time is considered specially liable to the assaults of evil, and it is worth while noticing rather carefully all that goes on in the birth-chamber.

In the case of many Brāhmans and other Hindus the after-birth is buried in the earthen floor under the mother's bedstead, or in some corner of the birth-chamber, and with it are placed one pice, turmeric, some salt, and an areca-nut.<sup>1</sup> The umbilical cord is cut at a distance of four fingers' breadth from the child; the end is bound with cloth and asafoetida, and then tied to the neck of the child with the same piece of string which had previously bound the mother's hair. The cord dries up of itself, and in four or five days drops off, when the place where it had been is smeared with clarified butter.

At the time the cord is cut, special texts from the Sacred Books ought to be repeated, but this has dropped out of fashion; indeed, seeing that no man may enter the birth-chamber and no woman repeat the verses, it is difficult to see what else could be expected.

Some Hindus observe special precautions<sup>2</sup> to ward off demons or evil dreams: for instance, the scissors which had been used to sever the umbilical cord are put under the pillow on which the young mother's head is resting, and the iron rod with which the floor had been dug up for the burial of the after-birth is placed on the ground at the foot of the bed. This iron rod is part of a plough, and, if the householder does not possess one of his own, it is specially borrowed for the occasion; its presence is so important that it is not returned for six days, however much its owner may be needing it.

Altogether the presence of iron or steel is now an important and rest-giving factor; for the midwife, before leaving, often secretly introduces a needle into the mattress of the bed, in the hope of saving the mother after-pains.

It is because all these things cannot be carried out in

<sup>1</sup> The Nāgara do not permit the after-birth to be buried in the house, but have it thrown away.

<sup>2</sup> These customs are not practised by Nāgara.

a hospital that it is so difficult to persuade an Indian woman to go there for her confinement; but there is also another thing that deters her. If the after-birth does not come away of itself, the midwife will give the mother raw millet flour to eat, in order to induce choking and coughing and so produce the desired effect; or if the case be more obstinate still, she will put fennel seeds into a brazier and hold the smoking mass as close as possible to the patient, whilst some one massages her stomach, and some one else beats her back. But in no case will they insert a hand to pull away the after-birth, for if this be forcibly removed, they firmly believe that the woman will never bear another child.

But now it is time that we turned to the baby; immediately after the umbilical cord is cut, the child is bathed in warm water. If a girl, it is bathed in an earthen or brass vessel, if a boy, in a bell-metal vessel; but in either case the vessel has to be given to the midwife as one of her perquisites.

It is interesting to study that lady's fees. As a matter of fact, her actual-charge is only eight annas for a daughter and one rupee for a son, but she makes her profits on her extras. She asks one rupee for burying the after-birth in the case of a girl, and two rupees in the case of a boy; but it is when she is going home on the first day that she gets most, for the people of the house have to give her then a coco-nut, a pound and a quarter of wheat, one pound of molasses, half a pound of melted butter, and seven areca-nuts.<sup>1</sup> All these things are given her on a tray, which she empties into a corner of her *sārī*, but as it would be unlucky to hand back an empty tray, she puts a little wheat on to it before returning it. She is given all this on the first day, and again on the sixth, and on the tenth, the twentieth, the thirty-seventh, and the forty-fifth.

The Scriptures require that even before the umbilical cord is cut a Vedic ceremony, that of *Jāta-karma*, should be performed, when the child is given a gold coin to lick, besmeared with honey and clarified butter. Nowadays, however, this is

<sup>1</sup> Rice and millet must never be given to the midwife at this time.

often omitted ; but if it is done, it takes place after, and not before, the severing of the cord.

One custom, however, is invariable : practically all Hindus, and Indian Christians too, feed the child for the first three days of its life on *galasodī*, a mixture of molasses and water ; and not until the third day is the baby put to the mother's breast. Great care is exercised as to the character of the woman who gives this mixture of molasses and water, for it is believed that the giver transmits her own qualities of good temper, wisdom, gentleness, &c., to the new-born infant. If in later life the child turns out badly, its friends reproach it by reminding it of the noble character of the woman who gave it its first molasses.

The woman fasts for the first day ; on the second she is given a thin mixture (*rābā*) made of molasses, wheat-flour, and clarified butter, and on the third she begins her diet of *śīro*, a thicker compound of wheat flour, molasses, and melted butter, on which she will live for ten days.

Every Indian woman makes a real attempt to nurse her child and usually succeeds. If the mother, however, is finally unable to do so, some Brāhmans will call in the aid of a wet-nurse of any good caste, but as Nāgara could only employ a woman of their own caste in that capacity, they are practically forced to feed the child by hand. For ten days at least the mother takes every morning a mixture, supposed to have medicinal value, which is composed of thirty-two ingredients, such as ginger, powdered coco-nut, dried gum, molasses, clarified butter, dill, pepper, &c. ; the cost of the whole mixture is about five rupees.

Unfortunately the young mother's diet includes little or no milk, and it is to this lack that some lady doctors attribute much of the phthisis so common amongst them.

Here we might perhaps pause for a moment to notice some more birthday superstitions.

We have seen the care with which the hour of the child's birth is noted. The day of the month and the day of the week are no less important. If a boy is born on the full moon

day, a proverb says that he will be very clever but will bring misfortune to others, for (and this is also the case with a boy born on the fourteenth day), either his mother, father, or grandfather will die, or suffer some heavy loss, within the year. There is another proverb about a girl born on a Wednesday : her father or brother will die or suffer loss within the year (she is called their *Bhāra* or Burden), but she herself will be very rich. Moreover, if a girl is born on a Wednesday, the belief is that the next child will also be a daughter. A girl born on a Tuesday or a Sunday, however, brings wealth to her parents.

Some Hindus believe (though others contradict it) that if three daughters are born one after another, and the fourth child is a son, or if there be three sons and then a daughter, this fourth child will be unable to speak clearly, but will stammer all its life, and still worse, he or she will prove a 'Burden', bound to cause grievous loss, or the death of some relative.

The anxious parents of a child who is a *Bhāra* go to a Brāhman, who examines the horoscope of the child to find out what means should be taken to prevent the evil happening. Usually a bronze cup is filled with clarified butter, and a silver coin is put in it. The child is made to look into the cup, which is then taken to the father, who also gazes at his reflection. The cup and its contents are given away to a Brāhman, and then, and not till then, is it safe for the father to see his child's face.

Another belief is that, if a girl is born on a Saturday, she will be very bad-tempered, and if on a Thursday, she will be very good-tempered.

The baby's personal appearance is also fraught with deep significance, for a child with light eyes is considered ill-omened, and if marked with anything resembling a serpent will do great harm to its relatives. On the other hand, a red birth-mark is very lucky and foretells wealth. A mole in the palm of the left hand or on the lip is also fortunate.<sup>1</sup> A further point about the birthday of the child is that the parents do

<sup>1</sup> We might perhaps mention here another curious superstition held by all castes of Hindus: if in a native state a mare foals by day (they

not like it to occur within a year from the marriage day, but no one minds if it is a year and a day from the wedding.

Everybody is pleased if a son is born resembling his mother, or if a daughter be like her father, for such children will be very lucky.

In addition to the two ceremonies of severing the cord and giving the child a gold coin to lick, the Nāgara have a custom of marking their thresholds when a son is born. When this is done, they make straight lines of clarified butter across the doorway as a sign of good luck. Amongst Hindu ladies of all castes it is usual for the acquaintances of the young mother, unless they happen to be in mourning, to go and call on her and inquire after the health of parent and child, and if the child be a boy, Nāgara Brāhmans in comfortable circumstances would give each caller five areca-nuts; other Brāhmans give molasses or sugar. Amongst Nāgara the friends, however, avoid calling on the sixth or the tenth day, for those are busy times for both mother and child. But other Brāhmans make a point of calling on this sixth day and making presents. If a bereaved mother call and ask for a few grains of pepper and fennel, she is hurriedly refused. If she obtained them, it would mean that her next child would not die, whereas the newly born infant in the house from which she took them would assuredly perish. They also watch that such a woman later on does not try and burn the skin of the child when it is playing in the street, for if she did, it would die, and her next baby would live.

The ceremonies that we have already mentioned may or may not be performed, but we now come to one which is almost universally observed by Hindus: it is the worship of 'Mother Sixth' and coincides with a time which, if ordinary hygienic precautions have not been observed, may be of special danger to the mother.

It is, as the name indicates, observed on the sixth day after (are always supposed to foal by night), the king of the state will assuredly die.

the child's birth, and if that sixth day happen to fall on a Sunday or a Tuesday, it is so auspicious a coincidence that the proud father has to pay for it by giving the child gold.

The floor of the birth-chamber is besmeared with red clay, and a low wooden stool is placed near the bedstead, covered with a piece of silk, preferably green or red in colour. Seven leaves of the *pīpal* tree are put on the stool, three being arranged in the centre and one at each corner. On each of the three central leaves something is painted; on the middle one of the three a representation of the cradle and child, and on the leaves on either side of it a woman and a man respectively; and on each one of the seven leaves a little heap of wheat or rice (but not millet) is placed, together with a tiny copper coin (a *pice*) and an areca-nut. Behind the low stool they put a little lamp fed with clarified butter, but this is arranged with great care in a place where it is invisible to the child, for, if he were to see it, he would later on go blind, or at least squint.<sup>1</sup> The next thing is to make the auspicious red mark for the first time since the birth on the mother's and on the child's forehead. This is done by some 'lucky' unwidowed woman, who has never lost a child, marking their foreheads with turmeric with her third finger. The baby is then put down on the floor to roll before the stool, whilst the women sing 'Roll, baby, roll; God has given you birth, He will give you food'. This stool is called *Chatū* or Sixth. Then the child's paternal aunt comes forward. She is a most important lady and in every ceremony we shall find that she plays a very leading part. Now she performs the actual worship of 'Mother Sixth' by putting some red turmeric and lime powder in water, sprinkling it over the stool, throwing some grains of wheat on it and placing on it or beside it some rice and at least one *pice*. She next turns to the little mite rolling on the floor and symbolically takes all its troubles on to her own head by waving her arms towards it with

<sup>1</sup> There is a saying that, if a man be squint-eyed, 'He must have seen the lamp on the sixth day'.

a circular motion, and then cracking her knuckles against her temples.<sup>1</sup>

The child is then lifted up, and, as a protection against evil, some of the black pigment is taken from the lamp of clarified butter and put on the edges of the child's eyelids. The stool is left where it was, but as evening draws on, pen, paper, and ink are put near it, for the belief is that on this night the goddess of fate (Vidhātṛī) comes and writes the child's future on the paper, or, as some believe, on the child's forehead. That the future may be auspicious, many Brāhmins are careful to provide only red ink made of turmeric and lime for the goddess to write with.

The next morning all the things are removed. The wheat or rice and the pice are given to the family priest, the midwife gets a present of half a pound of clarified butter, half a pound of molasses, two pounds of wheat, seven areca-nuts, and a coco-nut. The aunt takes the silk away and makes it into a coat for the child, which she will give him when she names him on the twelfth day.<sup>2</sup>

On this sixth day the child also gets a good many presents from his friends and relatives, such as silk for a coat, handkerchiefs, or, in the case of a girl, a small *sārī*; and the day is further celebrated by a feast, in which all the resident members of the household and close relatives join.

Birth causes ceremonial defilement, and it is a very interesting study to note the mother's progress back to ritual purity.

On the tenth day from the child's birth the mother bathes first with a mixture of turmeric and scented white powder in the water, and then washes with arīṭhā nut.<sup>3</sup> This marks her first step back towards ceremonial purity, for she may now clean her teeth for the first time since the child's birth, and an auspicious mark is again made on her forehead. To avoid

<sup>1</sup> This action can only be performed by a woman. A man takes his son's troubles symbolically on himself by smelling the child's head.

<sup>2</sup> For interesting local differences cf. *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. ix, pt. i,

p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Sapindus Saponaria*.



a chill after bathing, her hair is dried and rubbed with dry ginger, and she is made to sit near a brazier. She next takes a few grains of green pulse in her hand and throws them on the bedstead, which is removed and a new one substituted. (The throwing of the pulse seems to be a sign of gratitude and auspiciousness.) The Nāgara put ten nuts and ten pieces of *bāvala* stick for cleaning the teeth near the bedstead on this day, but Audīca, Sārasvata, and Vālama Brāhmans do not seem to do this. With all of them, however, the mother, after bathing, takes warm water and milk<sup>1</sup> in her hand three separate times and sips it three times. (Up to the thirteenth day the mother is always given warm water to drink; if she drink it cold, they think the child would die.) If the mother be strong enough, she observes all this tenth day as a fast.

The tenth day is an important date for the child also, for on this day it is bathed, first with half a cup of molasses mixed with milk, and then with warm water. After it is bathed, a very pretty little symbolic ceremony takes place: if it be a boy, he is put to lie for an instant on a slate that he may develop into a learned man; if a girl, she is deposited on a winnowing fan that she may grow up clever in domestic ways, of which cleaning the grain is one of the most important. (There is not yet much demand for a blue-stockings in an orthodox Brāhman household !)

A feast is given on the eleventh day, if the babe be a boy, to which all the father's relatives are invited, but the father himself, though the feast is actually given in the house where the child was born, may see neither mother nor baby. The paternal grandfather, however, is often shown the child, and, according to his means, gives it either gold or silver coins.

The father himself, if very keen on doing so, is allowed to see the child, though not the mother, on the next day, the twelfth after its birth.

<sup>1</sup> She only sips this diluted milk now ceremonially. She may not drink milk yet as an ordinary thing, lest she should never have another child.

The twelfth day of a child's life is as important as the sixth, for on it another of the Vedic sacraments, that of Name-Giving (*Nāmakaraṇa*) is performed. Certain Brāhmins, believing that, whilst even days are lucky for girls, uneven ones are auspicious for boys, hold that a boy should be named on the eleventh day and a girl on the twelfth. All, however, agree that, if these days fall during the dark half of the month, the ceremony must be postponed till some lucky day in the bright of the moon. On whichever day is fixed for the ceremony, both the father's and the mother's relatives come to the house where the child was born, where a mixture of millet<sup>1</sup> (which has been steeped in water since the morning), coco-nut and sugar is distributed amongst the guests present and sent to the houses of those who are not able to come.

The paternal aunt again takes the lead and, producing scarlet-coloured threads, fashioned partly from cotton and partly from silk which she has brought with her, ties one on each of the baby's wrists and ankles, two at its waist and one on its cradle. In the old days, folk say, the thread used was black, to ward off the Evil Eye more securely; it is only nowadays that red is used.<sup>2</sup> Certain Brāhmins decline to weave such a spider's web of threads round their child, and declare that one on the waist and one on the cradle are sufficient as a protection against the Evil Eye. The aunt also brings with her two tiny little bits of gold, each weighing perhaps half a gramme, one of which she ties on the cradle and one at the waist of the child for luck, or she may tie little pieces of iron on its cradle to keep off the Evil Eye.

Meanwhile in the principal room of the house a square portion of the floor has been smeared with red clay, and on this *pīṭhal* leaves have been placed. The baby is now brought for the first time in its little life out of the stiflingly hot birth-

<sup>1</sup> In certain non-Brāhman communities wheat, gram and molasses are cooked together on this day and distributed. But the Brāhmins consider the cooking of two different kinds of grain together as impure.

<sup>2</sup> The change was probably made in order to avoid the use of so inauspicious a colour as black.

chamber and, being placed in a red silk *sārī*, is swung as though in a hammock above the reddened patch on the floor. The four corners of the *sārī* are held by the four nearest relatives of the child, its own brothers and sisters, if there be any, being given the preference; as the children swing the hammock, they sing, and at the strategic moment the ubiquitous aunt pronounces the name. The song runs (in Gujarātī):

Olī jhoḷī pīpālā pāna,  
Phoic pādīyūn [Rāma] nāma.<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to give the name when it has been decided on, the difficulty occurs earlier in the choice of the name, for in India a name is a momentous thing, and it can only be chosen after many things have been taken into consideration, and still more avoided. The letters of the Gujarātī alphabet are under the influence of the constellations, but, as there are fifty-two letters in the alphabet and only twenty-seven constellations, each constellation has more than one letter under its sway, some indeed have three. The first letter of the child's name must begin with one of the letters that belong to the constellation under which it was born; thus, if the child was born under the Zodiacal sign of the crab, which owns both the letters H and D, the initial of his first name must be one of the two, and the priest will tell the paternal aunt which initial to choose. But even when the initial is decided on, there is still a great deal of thought to be given to the name: it must not be that by which any dead relative was called, neither may it be the same as the child's father or grandfather, but, at least in the case of Brāhmans, it should contain the appellation of some god, and end either in Rāma, Śaṅkara, Rāya, or Lāla.

In addition to this aunt-given name, the father's name is used as a sort of hyphenated name, and then there is the family name; the next generation will keep the family name

<sup>1</sup> Cradle and *pīpālā* tree and leaves of the same  
Aunt has chosen [Rāma] as baby's name.

and drop their grandfather's name, substituting their own father's for it. A wife in marriage takes the family name, but always keeps her own father's name, and a mistake Europeans often make is to address, for instance, Putalībāi, the wife of Dādābhāi, as Mrs. Putalībāi Dādābhāi, instead of putting her father's name after her own.

A taboo on names is still observed, and is universal throughout India. The wife never mentions her husband's name, and a husband never mentions his wife's, save on the wedding day. The correct way for a husband to send a message to his wife is to say, not 'tell that to my wife', but 'tell that in my house', and in the same manner he announces any message he may have received from his wife as 'from inside my house one says'. Similarly the polite way to ask after the health of a man's wife is to say 'are the ladies of your house well?' not 'is Mrs. Bhatt well?'

In some castes, until the mother and father are about fifty, they do not as a rule mention their children's names; after that the husband might allude to his wife as 'the mother of my son so-and-so'; until the father is about fifty, he never speaks to his children in the presence of his elders, and would never call to his son if his own father were at hand.

If a mother have lost more than one child, the new baby is not named until it is six months or a year old, or, if there be mourning or ceremonial impurity (*sūtaka*) in a family, the name-giving is postponed till some more auspicious season. But, if possible, the name-giving takes place on the twelfth day. The mother is then only winning her way back to a state of ceremonial purity, so she cannot be present, but she watches everything from the birth-chamber, the door of which is left ajar. She is still too impure to touch any one, so she cannot embrace the feet of the all-important aunt, her sister-in-law, but she does obeisance to her from a distance, and gives her four, or eight, annas. The midwife is also given a present. The mother makes the auspicious mark on her forehead again this day, and now her diet

also changes, and she is allowed vegetable curry, but no rice, for fear of cold; special sweets are also prepared (called *Meṭhī*), some of which the mother must eat every morning; these contain, amongst their thirty-two ingredients, five pounds of molasses, five pounds of melted butter, ginger, coco-nut, gum, &c. The most important ingredient is the ginger, for this is supposed to impart great bravery to the child, indeed a proverb has arisen from this belief, and, if a man prove very courageous, his neighbours declare that his mother must have eaten a whole pound of ginger.

For the young mother the twentieth day marks another step forward towards ceremonial purity. On this day she bathes sitting on the bedstead, and afterwards is given dry ginger, molasses, and clarified butter to eat, to avoid any fear of a chill. After she has bathed, she throws some grains of green pulse on the bedstead, which is then removed, and a new one—the third—substituted; the room is freshly plastered, and she again makes the auspicious mark on her forehead. But, though less impure, she may not yet do any housework, perform any religious duties, or go outside her room for more than a minute. The diet is now more liberal, various articles, such as bread and pulse, being added to it, but as yet no rice is allowed.

Another stage is reached on the thirtieth day, for then the mother bathes, not in her bedroom, but in the ordinary household bathroom. As before, she makes the auspicious mark, throws green pulse on the bedstead, and has the room plastered, but still, as one informant puts it, 'she may do no work and no religion' and may not go outside the courtyard of the house.

With the Nāgara the thirty-seventh day is practically a replica of the thirtieth, and with them it is not till the forty-fifth day that the period of ceremonial defilement is ended. With most other Brāhmans it ends on the thirty-seventh day with bathing, removing the cot, and changing to ordinary dress. (Up till now the mother has been restricted to one or two sets of clothes.)

With the Nāgara the period lasts till the forty-fifth day, when the young mother bathes and clothes herself, if possible in silk garments, or, if not, in cotton ones that have never been worn previously, and goes to the nearest Śiva temple. There she bows to the figure of the god, and puts some silver coins near the shrine; then, returning to her mother's home, she does obeisance to the feet of each elderly woman relative and offers them some small present, such as four annas. If her husband's house be near at hand, she goes there also, and bows to the feet of her mother-in-law and the elderly ladies there, each of whom blesses her and says something pretty, such as 'May you have no worries and many children'.

From the date of the child's birth up till now the mother has not been allowed to drink milk, but hereafter she may take that, and also another special mixture, made of gum and clarified butter and other ingredients, a little of which she takes every day. Now, at long last, the woman is considered pure, and the ceremonial defilement or *sūtaka* is finally lifted. After this date her husband can send for her to come home any day he likes, and after the birth of a second child he does not delay very long; but, in the case of a first child, he generally allows his wife to stay six months in her mother's home. When she goes back to him, her father has to give her a new trousseau, containing a certain number of garments, the number fixed on being very often eight, so that he would have to give her eight new *sārīs*, eight bodices, and eight petticoats. (Fortunately the fashions do not alter in Indian households, so that all these can be accumulated for future use!) The child also has to have presents: jewellery, coats, frocks, a cradle, a bed worth at least sixteen rupees, a quilt, some brass vessels, &c. Altogether the maternal grandfather of the new baby is lucky, in the case of a first grandchild, if he gets off under two hundred rupees, and if he be really very wealthy, the ladies of the family will see that he upholds the honour of his house by spending at least one thousand rupees on gifts to mother and

child; he will manage, however, to lay out less on each succeeding child that is born to his daughter.

There is another old Vedic ceremony called *Niṣkramana* which is now occasionally observed in very orthodox families on any convenient auspicious day after the forty-fifth.

In the case of a Nāgara lady a square portion of the courtyard, from whence the sun is easily visible, is plastered with cow-dung and red clay, and on it the sign of the *Svastika*<sup>1</sup> is made. The mother, wearing silk clothes, or absolutely new cotton ones, throws rice grains on to the square, and then, taking her baby in her arms, points out the sun to it, and singing the praises of that great luminary, prays to it for a long life for herself and her child.

Other Brāhman ladies, whose customs permit them to fetch water, have another ceremony. With them, on any auspicious day after the forty-fifth, the young mother goes down to the river, taking with her two small water-pots, some rice in the husk, and some millet grain. Arrived there, she bathes, smears her forehead with red powder, and sticks rice that has been coloured red with turmeric on her forehead, and then walks home, carrying the filled water-pots and dropping rice and millet from her hands as she walks.

Some Brāhmans observe a special ceremony, when the child is two or three months old, offering it milk out of a conch-shell, but this is not very usual now, at least in western India; nor is another custom much observed at the present day of the mother touching first her own and then the child's lips with an areca-nut leaf.

At the time of *Holī* (the obscene Spring festival), however, nearly all Brāhmans perform some special ceremonies. The Nāgara, indeed, consider the child still somewhat impure until the first *Holī* after its birth be passed. On the *Holī* day the baby girl or boy is taken to see the *Holī* fire, wearing round its throat a necklace of sugar drops. It is then carried round

<sup>1</sup> The *Svastika* is a cross with the arms bent round.

the fire three times, in such a way that its right hand is nearest to the flames. The next day the family priest comes and touches the child's lips with mango leaves or blossoms, but the Nāgara are particular that the red Holī powder should not be sprinkled over the child's clothes. Other Brāhmans deny that they consider the child impure till it has seen the Holī fire; nevertheless their ceremony for a child at its first Holī is more elaborate than that of the Nāgara. They dress the child in white clothes, sprinkle it with red or yellow powder, and adorn it with a necklace of dates, sugar, or pieces of coco-nut. Arrived at the Holī fire, water is sprinkled on the ground, and the mother, carrying the child on her left arm and holding a jug with a coco-nut on it, walks three times round the fire, pouring water from the jug as she walks. She then throws the coco-nut and some parched gram and parched millet into the flames. The coco-nut is rescued from the fire, and the unburnt part is divided amongst the bystanders, being known as *Holī prasāda*.

Some Brāhmans—not usually the Nāgara—not only mark the baby's first Spring festival, but also its first *Divālī*, the great Autumn festival. The young mother kneads some cow-dung into a triangle, or into a disk and, making a hole in the centre, inserts a piece of sugar-cane and places in it a lighted wick of cotton. Then, taking her baby in her arms, she goes from house to house, bearing the light in her hands, and asking for a few drops of clarified butter to keep it burning. She believes that she thus gains light for *Pitri-loka*, where her dead ancestors are.

Another Vedic ceremony, the weaning or *Anna-prāsana*, takes place about the ninth month with Nāgara, and about the sixth with other Brāhmans. A milk pudding is made with milk, sugar, and rice, and some of this is put on a silver coin and given to the child to lick. According to the Scriptures, it ought to be put on a gold coin, but nowadays it is usually placed on a silver one; anyhow the ubiquitous aunt gets the coin, whatever be its value. The gold is supposed to have



medicinal properties and to cure the three great diseases of the body: bile, cough, and wind.

We have called this 'weaning', but perhaps 'solid-food-giving' would have been a more appropriate title, for the mother goes on nursing the child, sometimes up to five years if no other child be born in the interval, though nowadays it is considered wiser only to nurse a child till it is about two years of age. The mother feeds the child quite irregularly, any time night or day when it cries, indeed it seems quite impossible to get an Indian woman to maintain a two-hours' interval between her baby's meals.

Sometimes, but not often in western India, the rite is observed of making the child at about seven or eight months old sit on the ground, when it worships the snake which upholds the earth.

Occasionally about this time, some orthodox families persuade the tiny child to choose its profession in life, by setting before it the symbols of the various callings, such as a pen, a knife, paper, &c. Whichever the child chooses it will be expected to adopt later on.

The child is then left in peace until some auspicious time between the age of three or five, when another Vedic ceremony, that of the hair-cutting, *Āula-karma*, is performed. Particular families often have to go to particular places to perform this rite: for instance, one princely family in the centre of Kāthiāwār has to go right off to Waḍhwān, that the hair may be cut near the memorial stone of a famous ancestress, Rāṇaka Devī.

Nearly all Nāgara have to go to their ancestral homes, but in the case of other Brāhmans, only if the mother of the child has made a vow to do so. Ceremonial hair-cutting is not usually performed for girls; modern Brāhmans, indeed, say that, though prescribed in their Scriptures for girls, it is prescribed without mantras being given.

The family priest having chosen an auspicious day, the father, the mother and child, and the inevitable troop of servants go to the prescribed place. There a booth is erected,

and an altar containing the fire is made. The child is bathed and dressed in silk, and the mother taking him on her lap sits near the altar.

The presiding priest or *Ācārya* takes some water in his right hand, in such a way that it lies at the base of the second and third fingers, and says solemnly: 'I perform the ceremony of cutting the hair, in order that the child may be free from the impurities contracted in the womb, and, being loved by God, may have a happy and a long life'.

Then follows the worship of Gaṇapati (or Gaṇeśa), that the whole ceremony may pass off auspiciously without any obstacle. The Elephant-headed son of Śiva, who would be up to mischief unless he were first placated, is worshipped by the offering of flowers, fruit, lights, and the five nectars, in the regular eightfold worship which we shall study later. Next comes the recital by four Brāhmans (who may be married or unmarried, but must on no account be widowers) of four passages from as many Vedas of five verses of Blessing. All four priests then sprinkle the child with holy water, which has been sanctified by first putting mango and *aśoka* leaves in it, and afterwards reciting mantras over it; the jug containing the water has also had a red cotton thread tied on its handle, and an areca-nut, a pice, and a few grains of rice placed in it.

The fifteen mother-goddesses, together with Gaṇapati, are now represented by sixteen heaps of rice, on which are placed a pice and an areca-nut. Seven more goddesses are shown by seven lines of clarified butter, and then a *Maṅgala Śrāddha* takes place.

As a rule, a *Śrāddha* is an inauspicious ceremony performed after a death, but at this time only an auspicious sacrifice to the ancestors is intended, so none of the Brāhmans change the position of their sacred thread,<sup>1</sup> and their hands are held with the palms downwards, not upwards. The names of the father,

<sup>1</sup> The student can always see at once whether the ceremony he is witnessing be auspicious or inauspicious by noticing the position of the thread.

grandfather and great-grandfathers, together with all their wives, are mentioned, and clarified butter is poured on the sacrificial fire. All is then ready for the actual ceremony to begin.

The priest pours some warm water into cold (thus reversing the usual order at ceremonies) and mixes either melted butter or curds with it, and then wets the child's right ear with the mixture.

Next, taking a porcupine quill which has three white marks on it, he combs the boy's hair and plaits three pieces of *darbha* grass into it. The priest then picks up a particular kind of razor which has an iron blade affixed with a copper nail, and cuts the upper part of the hair, into which he has already plaited the grass. As the hair falls, either the mother or the paternal aunt (so long as neither be a widow) receives it and mixes it with cow-dung.

The priest cuts the hair again closer, and again a third time, being careful of course to leave the *śikhā* or sacred top-knot.

In the same way the priest cuts the hair from three other parts of the head, waving the razor round the head and saying mantras the first time but not again.

The barber next steps forward and performs what may be called the second part of the ceremony, the shaving of the head, which is done without mantras being said.

The child is then bathed, and a Svastika sign is made on its head.

The cut hair is, as we saw, mixed with cow-dung, and afterwards either flung into a river, or a well, or else thrown away in a cow-stall.

The barber, when he shaves the child, is as careful as the priest to avoid cutting the sacred top-knot. Every Hindu who performs *Sandhyā* should wear this top-knot (just as every Muḥammadan should wear a beard), and this often makes a very convenient touchstone for a missionary, when he suspects a man of being anxious to make the best of both the

Hindu and the Christian worlds. Mr. Facing-Both-Ways is generally very unwilling to part with this outward and visible sign of his Hinduism. No experienced missionary, however, would baptize a man who insisted on retaining it. On the other hand anglicized clerks in Government offices very often cut it off as a mere matter of fashion and convenience.

But to return to the hair-cutting ceremony: the priest should be given 'the value of a cow', which has nowadays come to mean about five rupees, or (if the supposed cow were very valuable) twenty-five rupees.

The ceremony is now over, and the only thing that remains is to give Gaṇapati and the fifteen 'mother-goddesses' and the seven other goddesses a hint to go in such a manner that their feelings may not be injured. This is done by throwing grains of rice on the sixteen heaps of rice and the seven lines of clarified butter and saying in Sanskrit: 'You may take your leave, please come back when invited on an auspicious occasion'.

As we have seen, girls do not usually have their hair ceremonially cut, but many Brāhmans have a belief that a girl baby must not be taken out in the monsoon until her hair has been cut, lest she should be struck by lightning.

Another Vedic ceremony which is still practised for both girls and boys is the Boring of the Ear (*Karna-vedha*). It is not considered proper for a father to see the face of his daughter until her ears have been bored, so in the case of a girl it is done as early as possible, generally before the sixth day.

But whatever the sex of the child, the ceremony is much the same. An auspicious day is chosen, and the child is so arranged as to face the east. Then it is given a sweet to eat, and whilst the ears are pierced, the officiant says: 'See what is good with the eyes, hear what is good with the ears, smell what is good with the nose, taste what is good with the mouth'.

The officiant may be the father of the child, or a priest, but

most generally nowadays a woman from outside is called in to do it and paid four annas for her trouble, besides being given presents of wheat, molasses, and clarified butter. A proverb runs: 'It's only a stranger woman who has the heart to pierce the child's ear'.

The needle chosen should be of silver or gold in the case of a caste Hindu, and iron for a Śūdra, and the ear is pierced in the lobe, a hole being made there big enough for the sun's rays to pass through. Sometimes another hole is also pierced in the middle of the ear to keep off sickness. The operator repeats the names of Gaṇapati and of the tutelary gods, as well as of the three great gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, together with the nine planets and the eight protectors of the cardinal points, and finally bows to a Brāhman.

The ears are marked with red before they are pierced, and afterwards a red thread is introduced. Both ears are bored, the left ear with girls being the first to be pierced, and with boys the right. The ceremony ends by the parents either giving alms to Brāhmans or feasting them. A girl's nose is generally bored also, but it is not usual to bore a boy's unless his elder brother has died, in which case the new baby's nose is bored as soon as possible, perhaps when he is only ten days old.

There does not seem to be any actual ceremony with regard to teething, but there is amongst Brāhmans, as amongst other Hindus, a firm belief that neither the mother nor the mother's own sister must ever look at the child's mouth to count how many teeth have appeared, as that would make the teething harder. A proverb declares: 'If the mother or her sister look, the teeth that are coming will run away'.

All through the Hindu customs, although it is the father's sister who plays the leading part, there is a pretty belief in the oneness of the mother and her own sister; and a proverb runs: 'Though the mother departs, yet the mother's sister remains'. In this case the mother's sister is regarded as too nearly identical with the mother to be allowed to look at the

teeth, but the ever useful father's sister is called in (really that pushing lady must lead a bustling life!) if there is any difficulty, to rub the child's jaw till the teeth come through.

The first time that a child attends school is an important occasion. To begin with, it is extremely inauspicious to send a child in his sixth year; so, if he has not begun to go in his fifth (which is rather early for the pursuit of knowledge), he must wait till he is seven, which will make him rather backward. The difficulty is often surmounted by sending a child to school, if only for a day, when he is five, and then, the initial step having been taken, he can continue his studies in his sixth year without the fear of ill luck dogging him.

The Nāgara community seem to make more of the Beginning of Knowledge than any of the other Brāhmans. With them the parent gives the boy a tiny silver slate and a minute gold pen, the silver slate being carefully covered with red powder. The family priest writes *Srī* (i. e. *Lakṣmī*) on the slate, and the child repeats the word three times. According to the Scriptures, the priest should write on the slate in Sanskrit

‘ Salutation to Gaṇeśa,  
Salutation to Siddha,  
Salutation to Sarasvatī ’,

and the child should write over this with his pencil, but as a matter of fact this is seldom done in modern times.

The boy goes to the school and presents the slate and pencil to the master, together with a coco-nut. An old custom, seldom carried out now, was that he should also give the master a turban.

If the parents of the new boy are very rich, he is sometimes taken in a regular procession through the streets, and sweets are distributed amongst all the other pupils, and arrived at the school, he worships the master and some pens and ink.

With ordinary Brāhmans nowadays the child generally has neither silver slate nor procession, but just goes quietly to school, where he gives the Head sugar and a coco-nut.

A boy's birthday in India is not generally the wonderful and glorious day that it is to a child in England. On each anniversary he is just washed in water mixed with milk and molasses, and a lucky woman waves her arms towards him and cracking her knuckles against her forehead takes on herself his ill luck. If the family is very orthodox, he will probably worship Mārkaṇḍeya, one of the seven immortal sages, in order to gain a long life himself. Sad to say, it is considered unlucky to observe a girl's birthday at all.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SACRED THREAD

Its Importance—Preparations—Worship of Gaṇeśa—The Vigil—The Next Morning—The Young Men's Feast—The Thread itself—The Donning of it—The Giving of the Deerskin, Staff, Water, New name—Protection—Circumambulation—Commandments—Gāyatrī—Offering to the Fire—Begging—Rules of Conduct—The Third Day—The Bath—The Evil Eye—The Mimic Journey—The Return—Six Privileges of a Brāhman—Rules—The First Shave.

WE now come to the most important epoch in the life of a Brāhman, his investiture with the sacred thread, *Upanayana*. Until this takes place the boy is only a Śūdra, and it is this ceremony which makes him a Brāhman and gives him his place in the ranks of the Twice-born.

Brāhman gentlemen are more particular that the thread-giving and the marriage ceremonies should be performed exactly according to their Scriptures than in the case of any other ceremonies, and the writer is especially indebted for her account of this rite to the learned Śāstri who spent days working over this important subject with her.

The thread-giving and marriage are the two great events in a Brāhman's life, but though the wedding costs more, the other is the more important, and no Brāhman can be married till he has received the sacred thread.

The age at which it is received does not necessarily coincide with physical puberty, for if a father hopes that his son is going to become a great religious teacher, he may arrange for the ceremony to take place in the fifth year from the boy's conception (this was done, it is believed, in the case of the first Śaṅkarācārya); but as a rule it takes place in the eighth year



from conception for a Brāhman, the eleventh for a Rājput, and the twelfth for a Vaiśya. If, however, it cannot be performed in those years, special purifications will have to be undergone, and the ceremony postponed till the sixteenth year for a Brāhman, the twenty-second for a Rājput, and the twenty-fourth for a Vaiśya. If the postponement be any longer than that, it is looked on as a very grievous sin indeed.

These rules, it will be noticed, allow for the members of all three of the great sections of ancient Indian society receiving the sacred thread.

Nowadays, however, in Gujarāt and Kāthiāwār at least, the ceremony is practically confined to Brāhmans, Lohāṇā, and Bhātiā.<sup>1</sup>

The actual day on which so great a rite can take place has to be carefully selected. First, it can only be begun on one of four days, either a Monday, a Wednesday, a Thursday, or a Friday, and these days must fall within the bright moonlit half of the month. The month has to be either Māgha, Phālguna, Āitṛa, or Vaiśākha; Jyeṣṭha is sometimes added to the list of permissible months, but not if the candidate be the eldest son (i.e. the Jyeṣṭha of his family), for the rite may not take place in his name month.

Invitations are sent out ten or twelve days before the ceremony, and to show that the great change is about to take place which shall raise him from a low-caste man to the status of a Twice-born and allow him to perform the religious duties from which he has hitherto been debarred, the boy is decorated with a gold necklace of special shape.

A Brāhman girl is not usually given the sacred thread nowadays:<sup>2</sup> she must be content to remain a Śūdra all her life; but this being so, it is difficult to see how her Twice-born husband avoids contracting defilement by marrying her. In the old days, the Brāhmans say, girls were always invested with

<sup>1</sup> The student from other parts of India would find it an interesting topic for conversation to discover who receive the sacred thread.

<sup>2</sup> In the family of one at least of the ruling chiefs in Kāthiāwār girls are given the sacred thread.

this symbol of regeneration : for instance, Gārgī, the famous woman philosopher, who defeated the great Yājñavalkya in argument, always wore the sacred thread. Indeed there are some neat arguments ready to hand for future leaders of the Woman's Movement amongst Brāhmins.

Once the invitations are out, preparations for the ceremony are begun.

A booth is set up resting on four posts, but in addition to these a fifth post, called the *Mānikyastambha*, is erected. This is quite small, but very important, as it is supposed to represent Brahmā the Creator; and close beside it a bamboo post is always placed.

Then Gaṇeśa (Gaṇapati) is worshipped, the god who removes obstacles, and who is always placated at the beginning of any great ceremony. This god is accordingly invoked and seated, his feet are bathed, and he is offered a spoonful of water mixed with rice and a sip of pure water to make him holy. The god is bathed, first with pure water, and then with the five nectars (curds, milk, clarified butter, sugar, and honey), and afterwards with pure water once more, and a sip of pure water is again given him. Clothes are brought for him, and he is dressed, invested with the sacred thread, and decorated with the auspicious red mark on his forehead. Then follow the offerings; and rice, flowers and sacred grass, together with a mixture of three scented and coloured powders, are given to him. Lights are waved round him, incense burnt in front of him, fruit and areca-nut and pice are given him, he is solemnly circumambulated, and finally *ārati*, the ceremonial waving of lights, is performed.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as this is done, the priest guards against the coming of evil spirits by throwing oil seeds to each of the four corners of the booth.

Then, as at the hair-cutting, the fifteen divine mother-goddesses are installed and worshipped, and the seven other

<sup>1</sup> This full worship of Gaṇeśa or any other idol consists of sixteen different parts, certain acts that seem to us separate being counted in together, and vice versa.

goddesses<sup>1</sup> are each worshipped by a line of clarified butter ; four Brāhmans are called in, and each is asked to recite a hymn of blessing from a different Veda.

The night before the actual ceremony the boy's body is smeared all over with a yellow substance (*pīthi*). His father's sister gives him a special piece of yellow cloth, and a silver ring is fixed in the uncut top-knot of his hair.

After that he is commanded to spend the whole night in absolute silence.

In the morning the father and mother take the child to the booth, where the sacrificial fire is burning in the altar. (To light this fire a burning piece of charcoal had been brought from the house in a covered bronze vessel.) The mother takes her seat at the right of the father, as this is an auspicious function.<sup>2</sup>

The child is then shaved : if the ceremonial hair-cutting, already described, has been performed, he is simply shaved in the ordinary way by the barber, but sometimes to lessen expense the hair-cutting rite is not performed till now, just before the thread is given.

After the shaving is over, the boy is bathed, the yellow powder being rubbed off, and his body washed with warm water.

Rather a sad little ceremony follows. Some sweet food is brought, such as rice, sugar, and clarified butter, all mixed on one plate, and for the last time in their lives mother and son eat together ; however proud the mother is that her boy is a man and a Twice-born, it gives her rather a heartache to realize that from now on the boy will always eat with the men of the household. In all castes the men of a household dine together first, allowing the ladies to take their places when they have finished and withdrawn. (An English bride sometimes gives a terrible shock to servants unaccustomed to

<sup>1</sup> Namely, Śrī, Lakṣmī, Dhṛiti, Medhā, Puṣṭi, Śraddhā, and Sarasvatī, called the *Gṛītamātrikā*.

<sup>2</sup> At inauspicious rites, such as funerals, she sits on her husband's left.

English ways, if, finding her husband delayed, she starts a meal without him.)

The boy then feasts with other young boys, who must all be celibate and not yet invested with the sacred thread.<sup>1</sup>

After the feast is over, the boy is decked with jewels and seated to the west of the sacred fire and to the right of the priest who is his guru or preceptor. The guru tells the lad to say after him: 'I wish to enter the Brahmaçarya state', and then, 'Let me become a Brahmaçārī'.

Up to this time, the child, if under five, has very likely been quite naked, or if not more than eight, may just have worn a tiny piece of cloth; but from now on he must never be naked, but will wear a loin-cloth even when bathing. So as these words are said, two pieces of yellow cloth are handed to the boy, one to wear and one to tie later on to his bamboo, and a piece of yellow string with which to tie it, and appropriate mantras are recited. Then, whilst more mantras are said, a string made of *muñja* grass<sup>2</sup> is tied round the child's waist. In this string as many knots are made as there have been *Pravara* amongst his ancestors.

To possess *Pravara* is a great heritage, for they are saintly men who through their holiness won the great reward of being allowed to see Brahma. (A Brāhman readily understands the splendour of our Lord's promise: 'The pure in heart shall see God'.)

Everything about the sacred cord is symbolic: its length is ninety-six times the breadth of the four fingers of a man, the reason given being that a man's height is ninety-six times the breadth of one finger; whilst each of his four fingers represents one of the four states his soul experiences from time to time, namely, the three states of waking, of dreaming, and of dreamless sleep, and also the 'fourth' state, that of the Absolute Brahma.

<sup>1</sup> In Gujarāt, boys who have not yet received the sacred thread are known as *Baṭu*, or *Baṭuka*.

<sup>2</sup> *Saccharum Munja*, a kind of rush.

The cord must be threefold, because there are three qualities out of which our bodies are compounded: reality, passion, darkness.<sup>1</sup>

The twist of the thread must be upward, so that the good quality may predominate, and so the wearer may rise to great spiritual heights.

The threefold thread must be twisted three times, lest the bad quality, the darkness, should strive to gain ascendancy and pull the soul down.

The whole cord is tied together by a knot called *Brahma-granthi* which has three parts, representing Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, and in addition to this, extra knots are made in the cord to represent the various *Pravara* to be found in the particular *gotra* or lineage of the candidate.

The actual thread is just ordinary cotton, but it must have been spun by a Brāhman virgin and twisted by a Brāhman. In the old days it is believed that the Brāhmins wore cotton cords, the Kṣatriya woollen, and the Vaiśya linen; nowadays all who wear the sacred threads wear them made of cotton, but the colours vary, for the Brāhmins wear white, the Kṣatriya red, and the Vaiśya yellow, to correspond, it is said, with the colours of the mind of the wearers.

After marriage a Brāhman wears two threads, his own and also his wife's, which is regarded as an additional proof that all Brāhman girls originally wore their own threads.

A Brāhman, after marriage, must also always, when possible, wear the scarf of ceremony, but whilst performing religious ceremonies, at which he can only wear a loin-cloth, he puts on an extra thread to compensate for the absence of the scarf.

However, when a boy is given the thread, he is, of course, only given one, and the candidate actually puts this on himself.

The preceptor repeats an appropriate mantra, asking for strength and long life and illumination for the boy, who mean-

<sup>1</sup> *Sattva, Rajas, Tamas*, or 'Brightness, Twilight, and Darkness' as some paṇḍits prefer to translate the words.

while faces the sun, holding the sacred thread by the thumb and little finger of each hand, in such a way that it passes in front of the three middle fingers, the left hand being higher than the right.

As the preceptor finishes the mantra, the boy slips the thread over his own head.

Hereafter, he must always wear the sacred cord. During auspicious ceremonies, such as weddings and propitious sacrifices, he wears it hanging from the left shoulder (in this position it is called the *Upavīti*); when performing inauspicious rites, such as funeral ceremonies, he suspends it from his right shoulder, when it is called *Prācīnāvīti*; and when answering the calls of nature, it is worn round the neck, or, according to others, round the right ear, and called *Nivīti*.

If the thread should break, the wearer is supposed to remain immovable, without breathing or speaking, till a fresh thread is brought to him. In every Brāhman household there are always two or three spare threads, and no Brāhman should travel without an extra one. If the accident to the thread, however, happens in the jungle, the wearer should tie his scarf after the fashion of the sacred thread, first repeating the famous *gāyatrī mantra*. When a new thread is put on, the *gāyatrī* is always repeated.

The donning of the sacred thread is followed by the gift of a deerskin. If a whole antelope skin can be given, so much the better; but, as a rule, in these degenerate days, only a small piece of deerskin is provided, which is threaded on a string and then put round the boy's neck. Whilst this is being done, no sacred verse is recited, but the gift is made in absolute silence.

Then the candidate is presented with a staff, which must be of such a height as to touch the root of the sacred top-knot<sup>1</sup> in the case of a Brāhman, the forehead if the boy be a Kṣatriya, and the lips for a Vaiśya. Similarly, the wood changes according to the caste, for a Brāhman must have a stick of

<sup>1</sup> For local differences, see *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. ix, p. 39.

*Palāśa* (*Butea frondosa*), a Kṣatriya of *Bilva* (*Aegle Marmelos*), and a Vaiśya of *Udumbara* (*Ficus glomerata*).

After receiving the staff, the boy sits on a stool facing west, and the preceptor, who sits facing east, takes water into his joined hands and pours it into the boy's joined hands.

It is always important to notice how the hands are joined when water is ceremonially offered from them. If the little fingers are placed side by side, and the two hands held flat, and the water poured out over the tips of all the fingers, it is a libation to the gods; if the hands are joined with the fingertips and wrists touching, and the water poured, as it were, through a funnel made of the hands, that is an offering to living human beings; but if the hands are held flat with little fingers touching, and the water is spilt from near the base of the right thumb with that thumb pointing downwards, it is an inauspicious offering to the dead.

The preceptor next tells the boy to look at the sun, and as the child does so, he himself repeats appropriate verses. Whilst looking at the sun, the lad offers a coco-nut. Some offering must be made, since the sun, a physician, a king, a preceptor and an astrologer can never, according to the Scriptures, be saluted with empty hands.

The guru then puts his right hand on the right side of the boy and, alternately touching the boy's shoulder and his own breast, says: 'I take your heart into my vow. Let your heart follow mine. Carry out with an undivided mind what I say to you. May Bṛihaspati confide you to me.'

This is followed by the giving of a new name, when the preceptor takes the right hand of the boy into his own and asks him his old name. The guru gives him a new name, which is only uttered at the time of this particular ceremony, and then promptly forgotten, the old one alone being used. Not one of the writer's friends, Brāhman, or former Brāhmins who had become Christian, could remember the special name that they had been given at this ceremony.

The teacher next asks: 'Whose disciple are you?'

'Your Honour's', the boy replies.

'You are my disciple', the preceptor assents, 'and your new name is so and so.'

'I now entrust you', the guru continues, 'to Prajāpati and to Savitā, to the gods of water, herbs, sky and earth, to all the gods and all the demons, to protect you from every kind of evil.'

The boy then walks round the fire, either once or thrice, always, of course, with his right side to it, as this is an auspicious occasion. Thereupon, the guru offers clarified butter nine times to the fire.

A set of commandments bearing on the duties of his new estate follows, and the preceptor tells him to walk as a true Brāhman; to each commandment the boy gives his assent.

'You are a celibate', says the guru.

'Very well', replies the boy.

'You must sip water before beginning your meals, and at the end.'

'Very well', says the boy again.

'You must not sleep by day' (in a hot country, like India, over-indulgence in this habit is a real temptation to sloth).

'Very well.'

'Don't talk too much.'

'Very well.'

'You must bring sacrificial wood' (*samidh*).<sup>1</sup>

'I will bring it', says the child.

Then the guru adds: 'You must take a sip of water'; and the boy says 'I will'.

Next follows the teaching of the most famous of all mantras, the *gāyatrī*, to the child.

This verse we shall have to study more in detail when we come to the daily duties of the Brāhman; here we need only notice that the verse itself is impersonated, and the Brāhmans

<sup>1</sup> *Samidh* is the material for the sacred fire; it must consist of nine pieces of different kinds of specified wood, and none other than wood from these nine trees can ever be brought. Each separate piece must be as thick as the lad's teeth, half a span in width, and free from decay.



think of it now as a lovely young girl. The repetition of it cleanses from all sin, but no woman and no person of low caste may ever hear its life-giving syllables. The father of the child has the first right to teach this to his little son, but if he has failed to do so, the priest imparts it.

The boy sits to the north of the sacred fire, facing the west, and the guru sits opposite with his face to the east. The child bows to his preceptor, crossing his hands (the hands are always crossed when bowing to a priest), and with his right hand touches the guru's right foot, and with his left, the left foot of the guru. Then, for a moment or two, he and his preceptor look steadily at each other.

It is so important that no one should overhear the sound of the sacred verse, that the heads of both guru and child are now covered with a silk shawl about five yards long. Sometimes at this point the boy worships Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, represented by a book of the Vedas or the mystic symbol *Svastika* (the cross with the bent arms). In every case the priest bends forward and murmurs the sacred words into the boy's right ear. Slightly varying translations are given of the mantra; the version which the present writer's paṇḍits preferred runs: 'Let us meditate on the most excellent light of the Creator (or of the sun); may He guide our intellects'.

The Brāhmins like to draw attention to the plural number of 'us' and 'our', and compare it with the great Christian prayer 'Our Father', pointing out that both presuppose a social, not an individualistic, worship.

No lover of Oxford can fail to notice the striking resemblance between this, the great prayer of the learned class in India, and the noble motto of the ancient English university: 'The Lord is my Illumination'.

So sacred is the *gāyatrī* that the right ear of the child, once he has heard it, becomes holy for life and can save the sacred thread itself from contamination if that be wound over it.

The verse must first be taught in separate words without

the changes that come from the coalescence of words, in a Sanskrit sentence; next, it must be taught with the appropriate stops that belong to the metre, and only after this is it taught as a whole. It generally takes a child three days to learn it perfectly.

When the *gāyatrī* has been imparted, the boy offers some of the nine specified kinds of wood to the fire. He takes each piece in his right hand, dips it in clarified butter, and puts it in the flames, repeating the appropriate verse.

A line of water is then made round the fire, and the boy stretches out his hand to the flames, pulls it back, and presses it to his heart, saying: 'May Agni protect me and give me help; may Sarasvatī give me intellect, and the Sun give me light'.

The lad is now considered ceremonially pure, no longer of low caste, but a Twice-born Brāhman, and so he touches his own head, eyes, nostrils, hands, arms, limbs, and the different parts of his body to purify them also.

The third finger of the right hand is considered by the Hindus to be the most auspicious finger;<sup>1</sup> and it is with the third finger that the boy touches some of the ashes of the sacred fire and puts them on his forehead, his throat, his right shoulder, and his heart. Next, he bows to the preceptor, repeating as he bows his own new name and his family name, and, what is more astonishing, his preceptor's name. (According to the Scripture a man should never mention his own name, a guru's name, a miser's name, or the name of his eldest son, or of his wife. This seems to be the only time that a disciple ever does mention his guru's name.)

Then his teacher blesses him and wishes him a long life, and the boy bows to him and to all his elders and betters who are present.

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice that the first, the index finger, is the inauspicious finger, and is the one used at death ceremonies. Hindus have exactly the same objection that we have to pointing at any one with the first finger. This is doubtless one of our many common family traditions.

The lad next asks alms for his preceptor, a symbolic survival of the duties which in the old days a disciple owed to his teacher. He goes to his mother and to half a dozen or a dozen of the women who are present, and who he knows will not refuse him, and begs from them, and they give him the round tennis-ball-like sweets (*ladḍu*) so beloved of Brāhmanas, compounded of wheat-flour, sugar, and clarified butter. He submissively places all he receives at the feet of his guru.

The boy should keep silence throughout the whole of these days, an interesting injunction which seems common to initiation ceremonies.

In the evening the lad can proudly put his new-found powers and privileges into execution by performing for the first time in his life the evening worship, Sandhyā, which he must never afterwards omit, and this brings the ceremonies of the second day to a close.

The lad, as we have seen, has been passing through various stages on his road to the status of complete manhood. First, he was, as it were, a Śūdra, a person of low caste, then he was called a Baṭu till he actually received the sacred thread; now he has become a man of high caste, but he is a celibate (Brahmacārī), and will remain *in statu pupillari*, until the third day's ceremonies fit him for the marriage state.

In modern times the three days' ceremonies are often all performed on one day, but supposing that they are spread over three, on this, the evening of the second day, the boy will have to live as becomes a disciple, that is to say, he must observe silence; in strictly orthodox homes he must sleep on the floor; he must avoid any food that has salt in it; he should worship the fire and his guru, begging alms for his preceptor, but begging only from worthy houses, and not eating any of the food given till he has shown it to his superior and obtained his permission; he must tell no lies, and eat no food that has been taken off the fire more than three hours, lest life should have been formed in it, and so he might be guilty of taking life; he should cleanse his teeth with speed, not dawdling or

spending an hour over that refreshing part of his toilet; nor must he during his hours of discipleship do anything befitting a gay young bachelor rather than a novice, to whom all 'swank' is forbidden, such as displaying an umbrella, wearing shoes, marking his forehead, using flowers or saffron or scent, swimming in deep water, dancing, gambling, or singing.

Of course all these rules date from the time when the period of discipleship was not merely a thing of a few hours.

The beginning of the third day finds him still in the position of a pupil. He pours clarified butter nine times into the sacred fire, and then begins the study of the Vedas. This is shortened and symbolized by the preceptor reciting a few verses from the Vedas, which the boy repeats after him, and whilst doing so, the lad again offers clarified butter to the fire.

Now follows an all-important bath (*Vṛiddhi Snāna*). The water for it is fetched by eight 'lucky' women in eight new water-pots. In the water they put grains of rice and of red powder made of turmeric and alum, and flowers.

This is poured over the boy, who thereby ceases to be any longer a student vowed to celibacy (*Brahmacārī*), but becomes an eligible *parti*, fit to entertain thoughts of marriage.

He is now termed a *Snātaka*, and his waistband of *muñja* grass is untied, and appropriate mantras are repeated; new clothes are brought, which he dons, being careful to take off the little cloth as he puts on the bigger loin-cloth, since no *Brāhman* may wear two loin-cloths.<sup>1</sup>

The boy then eats a little food, consisting generally of curds and red oil-seeds (black oil-seeds are so intimately associated with funerals and death ceremonies that they could never be used at an auspicious moment like this). As long as the boy was a *Brahmacārī*, one particular toothpick was for ever denied him, but now he cleans his teeth with a piece of

<sup>1</sup> But though no *Brāhman* may wear two, he must always wear one piece of cloth, tied at the four corners; so that even under modern European trousers ancient India still lurks, in the form of a small loin-cloth.

*Udumbara* wood, the length of which should be the breadth of twelve fingers for a Brāhman, ten for a Kṣatriya, and eight for a Vaiśya.

He then bathes again in the ordinary way, his forehead is marked with saffron and sandal-wood, and he puts on the clothes provided by his maternal uncle. These clothes are brought in procession by male relatives and servants from the uncle's house, carried on brass and wicker trays, and as these trays may not be sent back empty, coco-nuts, areca-nuts, a few annas, or even presents of clothes are put on them. The same uncle has at this time also to give presents of clothes to the boy's mother and his brothers and sisters.

Before the boy puts on his new coat, he gives away the pieces of antelope skin which had been tied round his neck, and as soon as he is dressed, he gives away another symbol of his studenthood, the staff.

Here again there comes another touching ceremony, when for the last time his mother can treat her son as a little child. When a man in a state of great good fortune wishes to avoid attracting the influences of the evil eye, he puts a lemon somewhere in his clothing, but a little child is safeguarded by lamp-black, and so now, to mark the boy's transition, his mother steps forward and, for the last time, guards against the ill fortune his new clothes and general good luck might bring him by marking his eyelashes with lamp-black and making a smudge of it near his right ear. Henceforth, however dearly she may love him, the mother's love cannot protect him, she can only hope that he and his friends will not be careless about putting a lime in his turban or taking other grown-up precautions.

Whilst he was a Brahmaçārī, the lad could never look in a mirror, but now he is presented with that prime necessity for a marriageable young man, and, for the first time in his life, he carries an umbrella, and, of course, puts on shoes.

We have seen that he gave up his student's staff; instead of that, he is given a green bamboo to use on the entertaining

little symbolic drama in which he is about to play his part; and to this bamboo is tied the yellow piece of cloth which he had worn before he put on the bigger loin-cloth.

The comedy of going on pilgrimage to Benares is now enacted with appropriate staging.

The boy makes as though he were about to start on a long journey, and, as provision for the way, he takes in his hand a ball of sweet-stuff tied in a piece of cloth.

Sometimes a copy of the Vedas is also wrapped in cloth and tied to his bamboo, and, with this bundle on his right shoulder, he leaves the house as though 'off to Philadelphia in the morning', and starts out, accompanied by his relatives and friends playing on various instruments.

The preceptor makes seven lines of water across the road to represent the seven oceans; when the boy comes to these, he worships them, offers flowers, nuts, and seven pice, and marks them with the auspicious red mark. The teacher asks him if he is quite determined to go to Kāśī (Benares), and warns him metaphorically of the dangers and difficulties that he will have to overcome, assuring him that there are seven oceans (i.e. great rivers) in the way.

When he insists that, in spite of every obstacle, he really is determined on going, the guru tells him to run. But the ever-watchful maternal uncle has already gone on ahead, and is lying in wait for the lad, and he now catches him, takes him up in his arms, and either seats him on a horse, or else carries him back home.

In some other parts of India the drama varies a little, and the uncle, instead of actually carrying the boy home by main force, endcavours by bribes to beguile him from his purpose. First, he offers him five rupees, which the lad refuses; then a gold ring, which is also declined; but finally he promises to marry him to his own daughter if only he will give up the project, and this often the boy accepts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Kāthiāwār not even in fun would a Brāhman maternal uncle offer to marry his daughter to his nephew, for this would be playing with incest, so

However, this bringing home of the lad by his uncle, in whatever way it is done, is the modern symbolic form of the ancient Vedic *Samāvartana*, the return home of the student.

The boy is now a full Brāhman, and accordingly inherits the six privileges of a Brāhman: <sup>1</sup> studying the Vedas, teaching them, performing sacrifices for his own benefit, performing them for the benefit of others, receiving alms, and also giving alms.

Certain Brāhmins, however, will not make use of some of these privileges, which they consider derogatory; for instance, a Nāgara will never act as a priest, or receive alms, a Nāgara Brāhman <sup>2</sup> will only consent to officiate as priest for Nāgara, and will only receive alms from them. An Audīca or a Sārasvata Brāhman, however, can officiate as priest and receive alms without loss of dignity.

As a full Brāhman, too, the boy will daily perform the religious worship we shall describe later (ch. X).

After his return from his interrupted journey to Benares, the goddesses, &c., are dismissed. A little rice is given to them to send them away happy to their homes, and they are requested to return on another auspicious occasion.

Before the ceremony began, the wife of the Sun *Rannā Devi* (or, as she is popularly called, *Randela Mātā*) was probably installed; she is generally represented by a picture stuck on

abhorrent to them is the very idea of such cousins marrying, though it is permissible in certain other districts. Sins differ geographically in India as elsewhere, and the Brāhmins themselves have a caustic little proverb on the same subject which runs:

‘In the Deccan Brāhmins marry the daughters of their maternal  
uncles,  
In the East they eat fish,  
In the North they eat meat,  
In the West they drink water drawn up from the well in a leathern  
bucket.’

Showing that in each of the four corners of India the Brāhmins do something which the strictly orthodox elsewhere would consider defiling and caste-breaking.

<sup>1</sup> Of these privileges, a Kṣatriya has three: studying, sacrificing for his own benefit, and giving alms.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of those who do not know India it may be as well to explain that a Nāgara is of even higher standing than a Nāgara Brāhman.

a coco-nut, in front of which a lamp fed with clarified butter is burnt. Now that the ceremonies are over, she too if present is dismissed, the coco-nut is taken away and given to a Brāhman, but the little lamp is never put out, but allowed to go out of itself.

The boy is still called a Snātaka, and there are certain rules that he is expected to observe. He should not play or sing, but may listen to religious songs. If possible, he should never be absent from home for a night. He should never look down into deep water, such as a well or a big river, or look at his own reflection in water. Nor should he even climb a tree to get fruit. He must not walk along a highway or a lane in the evening, and he is forbidden to leap down from high cliffs or jump over deep pits. He must guard his lips and never speak unworthily, and night and morning he must look with admiration at the red glow of the sun. Though it is permitted on special occasions, as we have seen, yet as a rule a Snātaka should avoid all luxury and display, not holding up an umbrella even if it is raining, nor chewing areca-nut, nor adorning himself with flowers, nor wearing coloured clothes. (This last is an interesting parallel to the 'subfusc hue' insisted on for undergraduates by university rules in the ancient English universities.) He must never make fun of a woman, or spit towards the sun, and should avoid temptation by keeping away as much as possible from persons of low caste and from women. At night he should always have a light when he dines lest he should injure any living thing in the dark,<sup>1</sup> and (despite Dubois's remarks<sup>2</sup>) he is ordered always to tell the truth.

There are three classes of Snātaka : the first (*Vidyā Snātaka*), who are more particular about studying the Vedas than keeping these and other minute rules of conduct that are laid

<sup>1</sup> If the light goes out, he must stop eating, for in the darkness food is no longer fit for human consumption, but only for ghosts. If any one persists in eating in the dark, he will undoubtedly become a cat in his next birth.

<sup>2</sup> Dubois, *Manners and Customs*, p. 171.



down for them; others (*Vrata Snātaka*), who keep every possible rule; and a third class, the best of all (*Vidyā Vrata Snātaka*), who keep all the rules and who also study the Vedas.

The boy is now somewhat in the position of an English undergraduate (would that custom prescribed for him the same interest in athletics!), but he has arrived at man's estate. No longer can he dine with the women, but he must eat with the men and sleep in the men's part of the house.

As a matter of fact nowadays the ordinary Brāhman boy does not study the Vedas with the assiduity that was intended, neither does he keep the sumptuary rules; according to his detractors, he has invented a fourth class of Snātaka that neglects both Scriptures and rules.

Still the Brāhmans have behind them a magnificent tradition of study and self-discipline, and whatever changes the future may hold in store for them, their friends can only hope that the education of their boys may develop more and more along the lines, laid down in ancient days, of sound learning, self-control, and humility, since, for the East as for the West, Francis Bacon's great words still hold: *Regnum Scientiae ut regnum Caeli non nisi sub persona infantis intratur.*

The next Vedic rite also marks the boy's progress towards manhood. According to the Scriptures, when a boy is first shaved, a cow should be given to a Brāhman, but in modern times this gift is hardly ever made. The writer's friends, for instance, had never known it to be done. When the hair appears on a boy's chin, the family barber is called in—a barber, like a washerman, has a lien on a house—and charges turban for shaving the son. Of course the chin only is shaved, since the moustache is only shaved off as a sign of mourning.<sup>1</sup> A barber, it will be noticed, is called in, for as a rule (even

<sup>1</sup> If a senior relative on the father's side die, a man would get his moustache shaved off, but he would not sacrifice it for any one on his mother's side, save his mother herself; in the same way, if any of his wife's relatives die, it would be only for her mother or her father that he would shave his moustache.

amongst native Christians) an Indian does not shave himself.<sup>1</sup> A Nāgara would not cut his own hair, shave, or pare his own nails, and though some other classes of Brāhmans do at least cut their nails, the very orthodox amongst them will not do so. In any case they see that the hair and nail clippings are carefully taken outside the house and thrown away at some distance.

<sup>1</sup> Whilst discussing the subject of shaving we may notice that one class of Brāhmans, the Agnihotrī (see ch. v), have their heads shaved, all but the sacred top-knot, twice a month, on new moon and full moon days. A Brāhman of this class at the time of his wedding brings fire from his father-in-law's house and worships it daily in the company of his wife, but if his wife die, he may not worship it until after he has married again ; so during the time he is a widower he never has his head shaved.

## CHAPTER III

### BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE PRELIMINARIES

Vāgdāna—Inspection of the Bride—VIRGIN FASTS AND FESTIVALS (Worship of Śiva's Wife; Sun-worship; No-Salt Festival)—Age of Marriage—The Ward of the Gods—Eight Kinds of Marriage.

THE boy, having passed through all the ceremonies of infancy, childhood, and boyhood, is now a fit subject for marriage.

It is impossible for any one in England to realize what marriage means to an Indian. No early-Victorian old maid ever gave it the supreme place in her thoughts that it naturally seems to assume amongst Hindus. And no 'match-making mamma' ever inquired more meticulously into a young man's position and future than do the parents of both boy and girl in India; only, in the East, no money and no prospects are of the same importance as birth, or can make up for any bar-sinister or lack of quarterings. A man can offend against caste rules by eating meat, or by dining with men of other castes, and yet escape punishment by keeping his offence secret; but his marriage cannot but be known to all, and the whole caste feel that their blood is defiled if one member marry unsuitably. In fact, marriage is the real stronghold of caste; and though many a reformer does dine with men of other caste, very, very few have the courage to 'marry out'. In a native state, indeed, it is not safe to do so. If there be anything shady about the pedigree of a wealthy man, he will find great difficulty in obtaining a bride, and even a prince in such a case may have to go very far and pay very heavily for his wife.

The field into which a man may marry is extraordinarily restricted: for instance, a Nāgara gentleman may not marry

a Nāgara-Brāhman; not only so, but he may not marry into any other of the six classes of Nāgara, but must marry in his own. Even within his own class of Nāgara his bride may not bear the same surname as he does, neither may she be of the same clan (*gotra*). Every Brāhman believes that he is descended from one of the seventy-two great sages (Ṛṣi) of ancient days, and all Brāhmans claiming descent from the same common ancestor are said to be of that sage's '*gotra*', and are considered to be too near of kin to intermarry. Neither may a Brāhman marry any cousin, even to the second degree, on his mother's side, or in fact any one on the distaff side who claims descent from a common great-grandfather.

Amongst some other Brāhmans, though it is not allowable to go a-courting amongst any other subsect or subcaste but your own, yet there is a movement on foot to join these sects and subsects together again and so enlarge the field of possible candidates; but this is not yet the case amongst the Nāgara of Kāthiāwār.

So that, with the area restricted out of which you may not marry, and with many of the candidates within forbidden as being really or artificially too near of kin, it is often very difficult to find a suitable spouse; and yet the matter is urgent, for every girl must be married, and that right early, and every boy should marry too.

The personal factor has also to be taken into account, and there are certain regulations—laid down in the Scriptures (*Saṃskāra Bhāskara*)—which the candidates must fulfil.

The bride should not have been previously betrothed;<sup>1</sup> she must be younger than the bridegroom, free from disease and bodily defects, of good fame and conduct; there must not be too much hair on her body; finally she must have living brothers, if not, it is not likely that she will bear sons (unless special and expensive rites be performed). This last regulation points to what is, quite frankly and naturally, the object of every Indian in marrying, and of every parent in arranging for

<sup>1</sup> For this may involve the payment of a fine.

his children's marriage: that it may result in the birth of sons; and the very simplicity of this desire is often very beautiful and sacramental.

The bridegroom on his part must also be free from bodily defects, disease, and vices: even his nails should be perfect. Neither should the bridegroom have an unmarried elder brother, or the bride an elder unmarried sister, at the time of the marriage.

As is well known, it would not be according to Indian etiquette for the bridegroom to propose to the bride directly. (So ingrained is this in the Indian mind that even amongst Indian Christians it is not yet practicable. There must be some go-between; and there is not one of the infinitely varied and amusing parts that a missionary is called on to play that the present writer has found more difficult to perform fairly and impartially than that of proposing to some charming orphaned girl on behalf of some very unprepossessing bridegroom.)

After all possible inquiries have been satisfied, the request for the bride is made by the bridegroom's father, and the acceptance of the proposal and subsequent promise to give the girl in marriage is known as *Vāgdāna*, 'gift by word of mouth', and is conditional on neither party having any physical defects. Otherwise this exchange of promises is looked on as binding, and, as a matter of fact, an engagement is very rarely broken. If, however, an Audīṭa Brāhman should wish to break off the match, the penalty seems very extraordinary to any one recalling the procedure in an English case of breach of promise of marriage. For, in the first place, if it is the bridegroom who wishes to be free, no fine at all is inflicted; and if it is the bride's father who breaks off the engagement, he too is not liable; but the parents of the new boy to whom the girl may subsequently be betrothed will be the people to pay up. If the girl's father is prudent, however, he will consult the caste, and if his motives are approved by them, all will be well. The reason why the fresh candidate's parents have to suffer is that, when a betrothal is broken, the

sārīs already given are not returned (though the presents of gold and silver are given back), and, as the new lover is saved the expense of providing these, it is he who has to pay the fine (if any) arising out of the breach of promise, which may amount to as much as five hundred rupees. But supposing that all goes well, and that, after the promise, the parents of both children are more and more satisfied, the next step taken will be the betrothal.

The paternal aunt of the little bride arrays herself in a red sārī and a green bodice and, accompanied by one servant and the little children of the family, goes to the bridegroom's house. Arrived there, she makes the red auspicious mark on the boy's forehead and puts some grains of rice on it. The family priest then blesses the boy, and his parents tip everybody all round. These tips are neither shyly given nor stealthily received: every one expects to be given the exact present *per tariff*. The aunt will be surprised, in the case of people fairly well-to-do, if she gets less than seven and a half rupees; the priest expects two rupees; and the servant and the children one each. They then all dine at the bridegroom's house, and return to give full reports to the bride's mother. In the evening the bridegroom's friends all go to the bride's house to express their thanks for the honour done, and the future father-in-law sees the bride's face.

But now the bridegroom's people are all anxious to see the future bride, so, on some auspicious day, she is invited to dinner at the bridegroom's house. The bridegroom himself must not see her face, but his father and all the female members of the house watch her most narrowly, though, as she is so much younger, she is probably made less self-conscious by their veiled inspection than is her English sister when visiting her *fiancé's* people! Her future father-in-law makes her a present of clothes and of sweetmeats, but care is taken that these sweets are made of milk and not of flour.

The boy, in return, is asked to dine at his future father-in-

law's house and is given a turban or a cap before he leaves. Some time may elapse between these preliminaries and the actual wedding day, but in the intervening time presents are made to the bride on all auspicious occasions, and on the great days of Dīvālī and Holī she is given clothes.

The age of the betrothal and of marriage vary so much with different Brāhmins that it is impossible to say how long a time will elapse before the actual wedding; but there are certain fasts and festivals that unmarried girls observe with great care in order to obtain a kind husband; and one or more of these are fairly certain to be kept by every betrothed girl during her engagement.

In the month Phālguna girls worship Pārvatī, the wife of the god Śiva. They make a square in the compound of their house, smear it with red clay and mark it with different colours. In the centre of the square they put a ball of red clay to represent Gaurī or Pārvatī, and for about eight days they worship this ball by offering flowers and a red thread to it. On the eighth day the girls have a feast (called in Gujarātī *Guṇāgora*), to which only the unmarried may come; they worship Gaurī, very much as they did during the past seven days, but on rather a larger scale: the square is bigger and the markings larger, they offer more flowers, and all the evening they sing songs together: it will be remembered that Śiva's wife, Pārvatī or Gaurī, is one of the seven ideal<sup>1</sup> wives or *satī*, and she it is who has the power to endow her worshipper with unending good luck. So, whilst worshipping her, the girls ask that their future husbands may be good and kind, and that they may experience nothing but happiness in their married lives.

So great is the power of this goddess Gaurī over the happiness or unhappiness of married life, that she is also worshipped by girls on every Sunday that falls within the

<sup>1</sup> The seven ideal wives are: Satī (whose other name is Pārvatī), Sitā, Mandodarī, Tārā, Ahalyā, Draupadī, and Sāvitrī (only worshipped after marriage).

the month of Jyeṣṭha (May-June). They go to the river bank and offer salutations to the sun, and then proceed to worship Gaurī. To represent her they make five small heaps of sand, and put five small pebbles on each heap, and offer each one a sopāri-nut and a reddened cotton thread; they then give the goddess leave to go in the usual way by throwing grains of rice on each heap.<sup>1</sup>

Then they return home and keep a fast, but it is not a fast that breaks the heart of any child, for, although they must sit in one place and eat no cooked grain or rice,<sup>2</sup> they are allowed mangoes and unlimited sweets made of milk from the bazaar. In the evening, when they have broken this fast, they go to the temple and sing.

But the greatest of all the girls' festivals is *Molākāta*, or the festival of 'sitting-in-one-place-and-eating-nothing-salt'. What Christmas is to an English girl, *Molākāta* is to her Brāhman sister. It occurs in the sowing season, indeed the monsoon season in a ritual sense is said to begin with *Molākāta*, and the monsoon, as every one knows, is not only the most religious period of the year, but also the precarious season on which the prosperity of India depends, so that then, if ever, it is important to propitiate the powers that be. The monsoon, as we shall see later, rather resembles the Christian Lent in the way people promise to keep it by fasting every so often, abstaining from favourite dainties, and reading sacred books. Anyhow, it begins with this girls' festival of *Molākāta* and lasts, ritually speaking, till eleven days after the great *Divālī*, ending on *Deva Divālī*.

As has been said, *Molākāta* coincides with the sowing season. On the sixth day of the Hindu month of Āṣāḍha girls fill earthen dishes with loose soil from an ant-heap mixed with dry powdered cow-dung, and in this they sow wheat or barley seeds, so that, by the time the holiday has come, that is,

<sup>1</sup> Nāgara girls, who do not go out as freely as other Brāhmins, do all this at home.

<sup>2</sup> Some Brāhmins do allow cooked food.



on the last five days of the bright half of this month of Āṣāḍha, the seed should have sprung up. Unmarried girls begin to take part in the five days' festival of Molākāta when they are about seven, and observe it every year for five years, till they have reached the marriageable age of twelve and put away childish things. During the festival the girls may not clean their teeth with the ordinary twig of *bāvala* wood, but instead use white millet straw, stripping the sheath off it, and using the straw immediately underneath as a tooth-stick.

In the morning the young girls meet and go off to the river to bathe, and to make the five heaps of sand in honour of Gaurī, as they did before. They return home singing, and sit in one particular place in their homes, where they may eat millet, wheat, rice, or any pulse, provided only that it be cooked without salt. They may use sugar and clarified butter, but not treacle which contains salt. In the evening, under the guidance of a Brāhman, they worship the growing seedlings,<sup>1</sup> the girls offering the sixteen-fold worship to the plants, whilst the priest recites appropriate mantras. Every evening for five evenings this is repeated amid great rejoicings and much merry-making, from which, however, all boys are carefully excluded. But the last day of Molākāta is the most important and the merriest. In the evening as usual the seedlings are worshipped, but *mirabile dictu* they are then thrown on to the head of the presiding priest. (Imagine the surprise of a curate officiating in an English girls' school, if this were done to him.) The girls keep awake the whole night through and go about the streets singing. When a girl has observed Molākāta for five years running,<sup>2</sup> she may do so no more, but, to mark the end of her last Molākāta, five perfectly healthy Brāhman girls are

<sup>1</sup> The writer's *paṇḍits* gave several examples of sprouting seeds being worshipped (for instance, during the Durgā festival in other parts of India, and Navarātra in Kāthiāwār). During Dasērā (or Vijaya Daśamī) she noticed that growing sprouts were exchanged as people wished each other prosperity.

<sup>2</sup> Nāgara girls do not observe Molākāta, but towards the close of the monsoon season they worship sprouting seeds in their own houses and do the sixteen-fold *pūjā* to them.

invited to her house, and she feeds them. Their little hostess is now considered ready for marriage.

It is extremely difficult to say anything that cannot be immediately contradicted about the age at which girls and boys are usually married; for in every subcaste, in every district, and in every family the customary age varies, and this again will be affected by famine and pestilence, good harvests, or a rise in prices. As a rule, amongst Nāgara the bridegroom is five (or, better still, ten) years older than the bride, who is usually about eleven or twelve years of age, but who may be married as early as nine if there be war or unrest in the country. In normal times, however, Nāgara do not like their daughters to marry before the age of twelve, and they may keep them unmarried till fifteen.

The idea is that a girl must have gone through the wedding ceremony before she attains physical puberty. The men say that it is not they but their wives and mothers who are most anxious that the girls should be married young. If a girl does reach this stage in her life-history before the wedding day, the fact is carefully hidden, for the saying is that, with every step an unmarried girl takes after puberty, sin accrues to her mother and father. One idea certainly is that, if the girl, after she is physically capable of bearing a child, does not do so, her parents are guilty of, as it were, destroying the life that might have been born. Another important factor, however, that makes a careful mother anxious to get her daughter married early is the abominable way in which any enemy of the family will spread reports about the unchastity of an unmarried girl, without having one tittle of evidence to support the story. The most conclusive reply that the injured family can urge is that the girl has not attained puberty, and until the law of libel is strengthened in India, most mothers will continue to marry their daughters ere they lose the ability to make that reply. Another reason in favour of early marriages is that after attaining puberty an unmarried girl would have to make atonement by offering

clarified butter to the sacrificial fire and making gifts to Brāhmins. As a general rule then, amongst Nāgara the bride is eleven or twelve, and the boy about sixteen or seventeen at the time of the wedding, but enlightened opinion and the desire for education is steadily raising the age. Amongst some of these Brāhmins the girl after marriage remains in her own mother's house till she attains physical puberty, and this custom is approved by other Brāhmins, even when they do not follow it. Perhaps the line of least resistance for agitators against the proved evils of child-marriage would be to try and popularize this practice, which, though it may not go to the root of the matter, does something to guard for a little girl her sacred right of an uncurtailed, innocent childhood, and to protect her and the community against the harm caused by immature mothers bringing forth sickly infants.<sup>1</sup>

For a boy studying at the University, whose mind in those dawn-golden days ought to be filled with thoughts of books and examinations, with splendid (if quite impracticable) ideals about the reform of everything in heaven and earth, and with athletics and open-air ideas generally, to be burdened with too early fatherhood is a real catastrophe. Indeed, it is hardly less pathetic to see a boy robbed for ever of his jolly, nonsensical, irresponsible youth, than to see a girl deprived of much of her childhood and of her entire girlhood.

All Brāhmins agree that a girl should not marry until she is six years old, for till then she is under the guardianship of the gods. For the first two years of her life she is the ward of Soma. Soma may mean that mysterious plant which bears leaves only in the bright half of the moon, and whose exhilarating juice only a Brāhman can digest. This plant is unidentified in Kāthiāwār, but it is believed that some years ago in the south it was discovered and used in sacrifice. In this case, however, the guardian Soma seems only to mean the moon.

<sup>1</sup> Some Indians, such as Kaṣṭhā Kāṣṭhīs, actually betroth children before they are born, but they are not sent to live with their husbands till they are sixteen, and sometimes twenty, years old.

From two to four the child's guardian is the god Gandharva, the god of song. Lastly, she is ward to Agni, the god of fire.

It is interesting to notice that each of these three gods is a Vedic deity; it is also interesting to notice the anger caused amongst Brāhmans by the unlucky translation in the 'Sacred Books of the East' (*S. B. E.* vol. xxix, p. 218) which seems to imply that the girl, instead of being the ward, has been the wife of each of these three gods. Nothing gives one a clearer idea of a Hindu's detestation of the very idea of a second marriage in the case of a girl, than his wrath at the implication that each of his virgin daughters has been married three times before she comes to her human marriage at all.

There are eight kinds of marriage, the Scriptures say, some of which are good, and some very evil.

First, there is the *Brāhma* marriage, when the father gives his daughter to a bridegroom of good character and learned in the Vedas, and the wedding ceremony is performed by Brāhmans. This is the most usual form of marriage.

Then there is the *Daiva* wedding, when a ruling chief, a Kṣatriya, gives his daughter to some famous Brāhman priest invited to perform a special sacrifice. As none of these particular sacrifices are performed nowadays, the gift of a chief's daughter as a reward for performing them is in modern times an unusual form of marriage!

*Ārsa* is the name given to a wedding when the father exchanges, or, to put it bluntly, sells his daughter for, say, a couple of cows and seventy-five rupees. This form is detested by Nāgara, who, lest they should be accused of making a profit out of the sale of a daughter, will not even drink water in their son-in-law's house. As therefore no Nāgara father-in-law, mother-in-law, or elder brother-in-law can stay in the bridegroom's house, for fear of this reproach, the little bride will have to content herself with entertaining her younger brothers and sisters after her marriage.

In Gujarāt many of the Nāgara make money settlements on their daughters, and in Kāthiāwār, though they do not do

this, they give them jewellery to the value of at least five hundred rupees, which becomes the bride's personal property.

Some of the Audīca Brāhmans have taken definite vows against the sale of their daughters, a transaction which under some transparent disguise used sometimes to occur in their caste, as it does in fact quite openly amongst low-castes.

With certain Brāhmans in Gujarāt, as in Bengal and the Deccan, the father of the bride has to buy a son-in-law.

Amongst the Rājputs in Kāthiāwār the father always had to give a dowry with his daughter, and the size of this dowry led to the practice of female infanticide amongst them, or, as it was euphemistically called, causing-one's-daughter-to-drink-milk.<sup>1</sup>

A fourth kind of marriage—*Prājāpatya*—is only a variation of the first type, when, at the close of the ceremony, the father of the bride, in true patriarchal fashion, calls the newly wedded pair to him and makes them promise that they will lead a meritorious life and act according to the Vedas.

An *Āsura* marriage is a very real sale of the bride, for whom the bridegroom may have to pay anything from two thousand to fifty thousand rupees. Amongst certain Brāhmans, as well as some Jaina and Bhātiā (especially in Kāthiāwār), this form of marriage, though much condemned by reformers, is still practised.

But the most interesting form of marriage, from the reformer's point of view, is the *Gāndharva*, when the bride and bridegroom make their own marriage for themselves. The pair fall in love, and then ask their parents' consent. This is a form of

<sup>1</sup> The writer is indebted to the late Rev. G. P. Taylor, D.D., for the following note: 'The Gujarātī term *dudha pītun*, or milk drinking, is not merely euphemistic, but also suggestive of the method which was generally employed in the taking of the infant's life. The mother, having applied opium to her breast, and thus having poisoned at its source her babe's natural sustenance, would see her offspring, whilst pressed to her bosom, sink into the sleep of death. Other expedients too were at times adopted. The infant's head would be held down in a deep pail of milk: or a cloth, soaked in milk, would be thrust far back into the mouth so as to choke the child.'

marriage to which probably more attention will be paid in the future, for though hardly ever practised now, it yet has the sanction of the Vedas. It avoids the evils of child-marriage, and moreover allows the man and woman freedom of choice. Another great advantage of the Gāndharva type of marriage is that there is no question of buying bride or bridegroom, and that it avoids all the endless fuss of a Brāhma marriage. The man and woman simply call in a priest, exchange gifts, and are married by him, vowing fidelity to each other in the presence of the sun.

The remaining two forms of marriage are entirely evil. In the one, the *Rākṣasa*, the form amounts to marriage by conquest. It occurs when the bridegroom, either in war or in time of peace, with the aid of armed dacoits, overpowers or kills the parents and relatives and carries off the bride. This is the way that the god Kṛiṣṇa obtained Rukmiṇī, and that Pṛithivīrāja Čauhāṇa married his cousin Saṁyuktā.

The other evil marriage, *Paīśāca*, is marriage by craft, when the bridegroom overpowers an unconscious and perhaps swooning bride.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WEDDING

Fixing the Day—A Month Before—The Invitations—Omens—The Booth—Auspicious Śrāddha—Feasting—The Readings—The Fruit-tying—Worship of Potter's Wheel—The Astrologer—The Day Before—THE WEDDING DAY—Visits—The Divine Bride and Bridegroom—The Wedding Toilets—The Best Man—Procession—Arrival—The Curtain—THE GREAT WORSHIP (Madhuparka)—GIFT OF THE BRIDE (Wedding Fire, Anointing, Feet-washing, Golden Śrāddha, Crown, Thread-girding, Tying)—Sacrificing to the Fire—The Brother's Part—The Stone—Seven Steps—Sun or Pole-star—Greetings—The Common Meal—Wedding Presents—Gift of a Cow—Almsgiving—Final Bonne Bouche.

THE form of marriage which we are to study is the ordinary Brāhma ceremony, and tedious and multitudinous as we shall find its rites, yet it is worth while to study them carefully, if we really want to understand the thoughts of our Indian sisters, for they give us a perfect picture of the Hindu woman *en fête*. For hundreds of years the greatest fun of the high-caste Indian lady has centred round weddings. These are her dinner-parties, her 'at homes', and her concerts. In fact, a wedding is to a Brāhman lady what her London season is to the wife of the ordinary country squire in England. If we want to understand a Brāhman's thoughts about the next world, we must study his funeral ceremonies; but if we wish to know how an Indian lady makes the most of this world, we must go to a wedding. Most Hindu men would fain curtail some of the endless ceremonies and expense (for an Indian gentleman dislikes the fuss of a wedding only a little less than does an Englishman), but the ladies of his family are going to have the times of their lives, and not one single item will they omit. All the world over one of the best touchstones of

a man or a woman's character is to be found in their choice of amusements and their idea of fun; at an Indian wedding we shall have abundant opportunities of studying both, and we shall indeed be dull-witted, if we do not gain some impression of the charm and the delightful gaiety of Indian women, and of the way their fun centres round their home. To many of us the fascination of Hindu ladies lies in this very 'hominess' and in the pretty interest they take in the home life of us exiles. A wedding is our chance to get a glimpse into the gladness of their homes.<sup>1</sup>

The first thing to do, of course, is to fix the wedding day. This can never take place in the rainy season, for then Viṣṇu, the Protector, whose aid young married people specially need, is in the lower regions (Pātāla). The three gods take it turn and turn about to go there for a four months' course; Brahmā goes for the winter, Śiva for the hot weather, and Viṣṇu goes for the monsoon, to stay with Balirāja, whom he himself had driven thither. The auspicious wedding months are roughly from October to June (Kārttika to Jyestha). But to find the actual day an astrologer is called in. He has not only to choose a lucky day, but also to avoid hitting on an unlucky one. The day must not be the last day of the month, or any day when the sun is in the ninth sign of the zodiac, Sagittarius, i.e. about December 14 to January 14, nor any day when the sun is in Pisces, the twelfth sign of the zodiac (*Mina Rāsi*, February-March). No one may marry when neither Venus (*Śukra*) nor Jupiter (*Bṛihaspati*) is visible; and it is only safe to marry when the moon exercises a benign influence over both bride and bridegroom.

In the case of the bridegroom it is all important that the sun should be favourable, whilst in the case of the bride it is the influence of the planet Jupiter that matters most.

Well, the astrologer does the best he can and fixes the day,

<sup>1</sup> *Contr.* Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 380. 'It is out of the power of any European, to whom the inner apartments of Indian households are forbidden ground, to give a complete description of the entire marriage ceremonial.' This is only true for the mere man!



and a month before its advent both households begin to prepare for the fray.

A red square is made in the compound of the bride's house, and on this are placed two wooden stools, on one of which the bride sits, and opposite to her a lucky woman. This woman now marks the girl's forehead with an auspicious mark the size of a shilling piece (whereas the ordinary size is no bigger than that of a threepenny bit) and puts a necklace of gold round her neck. At the same time in the bridegroom's home a lucky woman has been marking him and giving him a necklace.

Now the preparations are indeed begun, and amid a perfect cataract of arriving relatives and excited conversation clothes are discussed, ordered and bought, and some of the dry food, such as *seva* and *pāpada*<sup>1</sup> is prepared. The first *pāpada* that is made is worked up into a rough image of Gaṇeśa (the god of lucky beginnings), and when the biscuits are put on the bedstead to dry, they are very careful that this Gaṇeśa biscuit shall be the first one put down. At this time, too, in both houses a feast is given, to which the relatives are invited, and amidst great rejoicings auspicious songs are sung, and every single aunt and cousin is given a present of molasses before they leave.

From now right up to the wedding day amongst certain Brāhmans (not Nāgara for instance) both the girl and the boy are rubbed all over with finely-ground parched beans and turmeric mixed with sweet oil. The turmeric must be ground in a hand-mill turned by seven lucky women, who all put their hands on it at the same time. Every evening women now come and sing auspicious songs and are repaid in dates and betel-leaf.

Invitation cards are issued about this time to friends living at a distance. These always have the image of Gaṇeśa imprinted on them and are sent out in the name of the senior man of the household.

<sup>1</sup> *Seva* resembles vermicelli and *pāpada* are delicious wafer-like pancake-shaped lentil cakes or biscuits, which Brāhmans make better than any one else.

Now, too, wise folk begin to notice omens ; no one, however severe a cold he may have, may sneeze aloud : the sneeze must be strangled heroically at birth ; no child may use an unlucky word, or one that could even be made to bear an inauspicious meaning ; the bride may not see a sweeper carrying away rubbish on his head, or look at the swept-up dust of the house, much less herself sweep ; it is also considered unlucky if she sees a cat cross the road. But, saddest of all, no little widows may come to the house, or touch the marriage booth ; and until one realizes how every Indian woman loves a wedding, one cannot understand what a deprivation this means. It is as though an English officer were forbidden to touch or see a horse.

The erection of the two marriage booths<sup>1</sup> (which are run up five or eight days before the great day), like the reading of the banns for the last time in England, shows that the wedding is now imminent.

A booth is put up at both houses, but we need only examine that at the bride's home.

It rests on four posts, but besides these four there are two other sticks, one a piece of bamboo (if possible it should be still green, not dry) and the second a piece of wood about a foot long, which are put in near one of the posts. The green bamboo is a symbol of auspiciousness and is put in with the wish that the family may remain green and prosperous. The twelve-inch piece of wood is called the *Māṇikyastambha* (or ruby pillar), and to symbolize the four faces of the god Brahmā two sticks are tied crosswise at the top of it ; on this are placed *pīpal* leaves, turmeric, reddened thread, and a *ma-dana* fruit, and at the top of all, one of the bride's ivory bangles.

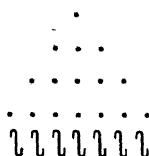
A large hole is dug near one of the four posts supporting the booth, but near which particular post it will be dug depends on the season of the year ; for, according to the

<sup>1</sup> Some Brāhmins are particular that the booths should be put up on succeeding days and not on the same day.

position of the sun, it may be the most northern or the most southern of the posts.

You see, the serpent (*Śeṣanāga*) which supports the earth shifts his position in his sleep in accordance with the movements of the sun, and so the ruby pillar has to be inserted with great care, lest it should puncture him, for, all the world over, it is a wise course to let sleeping snakes lie!

But before this post is inserted, a small earthenware pot, filled with clarified butter, curds, milk, honey, and sugar, is put into the hole. Into the booth itself an image of Gaṇeśa is brought, and also the fifteen<sup>1</sup> all-important goddesses. These fifteen are represented by lines of melted butter and a circle of red marks made on a low stool. All fifteen goddesses are first worshipped in the booth; then the stool bearing their symbols is removed to the last room in the house, and there on the back wall a pyramid of red dots is made, the bottom row of which represents seven special goddesses:



Cotton wool soaked in clarified butter is pressed against each of these seven dots so that the butter trickles down and makes seven lines which represent the Gotra-devī (the goddess of the special subcaste). The pillar is then inserted, and an auspicious *śrāddha* is performed.

This auspicious *śrāddha* (*Vṛiddhi śrāddha*)<sup>2</sup> is a sort of insurance. The difficulty is that if some distant relative were to die, it would not only cause grief to his remote cousins, but

<sup>1</sup> The writer has sometimes had the number of these given to her as sixteen, not fifteen.

<sup>2</sup> Monier Williams does not seem to have understood that whilst certain *śrāddha* (like the one we are now discussing) are auspicious, others, as we shall see later, are inauspicious. Cf. Monier Williams, *Hinduism*, p. 65.

also reduce their house to a state of such ceremonial impurity (*sūtaka*) that no one would be able to drink or eat in it. But if once this auspicious *śrāddha* has been performed, no *sūtaka* can attach itself to the house (unless the person so inconsiderately dying were a very near relative indeed), and so without any harm people can feast there. Of course, if the death of a very near relative takes place, *sūtaka* automatically occurs, and the whole ceremony has to be postponed.

The size of the booth depends, in the bride's house, on the length of her forearm, being either four or seven times the length measured from elbow to finger tip; at the bridegroom's house his arm is used as the unit, and so Indian children, if they are wise, will grow as big and long-armed as possible, in order to reap the benefit on their own wedding day.

Until the actual marriage the bridegroom must never enter the bride's wedding-booth, nor any other that may have been erected in the town.

At both houses now, for the five or eight days that intervene between the erection of the booth and the wedding, guests are entertained at midday breakfast and late dinner, and from this time the expense really begins. A *Nāgara* host, for instance, expects to entertain about a hundred guests for five days before and five days after the wedding, and to spend anything from six hundred rupees upwards in doing so. Of course for many people a wedding is the only time when they entertain their friends, and takes the place, for the ladies, as we have seen, of our dinners and dances and garden parties.

So the ladies get up about five in the morning, bathe and array themselves in their best clothes, which during all these five days are of silk and on the great day should be of gold brocade, and which may be of any colour save black. They all wear a great deal of jewellery, including ornaments in their noses, and have the auspicious marks on their foreheads.

It might be thought that, with so many guests coming to dine, the ladies of the house would be very busy cooking, or superintending the cooking, for that is usually the women's

part in India as well as in England ; but not a bit of it ! The ladies, as we said before, are out for the time of their lives, so they set the family priest (at least amongst the Nāgara) and his assistants to cook ; nor will they even dream of helping him, but, dressed in their best, they go off to sing songs and invite their friends to dinner. Imagine the awful havoc that indigestion would work amongst an English wedding party whose cakes and pastry had all been prepared by the heavy hand of a typical British rector.

The women of the house are specially careful to go personally to invite senior ladies and those but lately out of mourning, who will not come unless pressed. Meanwhile the family priest is busy making tennis-ball-like sweets (*laḍḍu*) and sweets that look like twisted macaroni but taste quite different (*jalebī*), and heaps of other delicacies composed of gram or wheat flour, mixed in different ways with clarified butter, sugar, spices, and saffron. (Milk is very little used at wedding feasts, for fear of its turning sour.)

But, though during all the ten days the food is rich and rare, the biggest feast—the true *barā khānā*—occurs on the third<sup>1</sup> or the fourth day after the wedding, when the bride's father has to see that if possible a hundred dishes are provided. Fortunately for the father's purse, pickles of various sorts each count as a dish among this hundred.

Before the wedding the priest not only cooks, but also has to find time to instruct the little bride with regard to her future duties. So day after day he reads to her from the R̥ig Veda concerning the conduct and behaviour of the perfect wife. All the time the little girl sits so sedately with her hands folded in her lap and her face cast down, that the on-looker would never guess that the child did not know a word of Sanskrit and had not an idea of what was being read to her. These readings should last for an hour and a half every day for a week, but, as a matter of fact, the feastings with which

<sup>1</sup> If the bridegroom is a Vaiṣṇava, it will be on the fourth, otherwise on the third day.

they have to be accompanied prove so expensive, that the priest is asked to read a little more every day and get it all compressed into four or five days.

Whilst the reading is going on, a little lamp of clarified butter is lit and put under a sieve, where it burns each day till the reading is completed. The soot that gathers on the sieve is considered very auspicious and used as a pigment on great occasions.

About this time the priest bores the hard fruit of the *madana* and ties it to the wrist of the bride and the bridegroom. This fruit is sacred to the god of love, and its presence will save either of them from the ravages of passion during the next eight or ten days. (Three times in her life may an Indian woman have this fruit tied to her wrist: now, at her wedding; later, when she gains the happy certainty that she will bear a child; and lastly, it is tied to her dead wrist if she have been so fortunate as to die in the sunshine of her days, unwidowed and leaving a husband to mourn her.)

After the priest has tied the madana fruit to the little bride's wrist, he is given presents, usually consisting of wheat, coco-nut, clarified butter, dry dates, some money, and at least two loin-cloths.

About this time also a picture of Gaṇeśa is drawn outside on the lintel of the door of the house, for he is the presiding deity at weddings; and then the gardener is asked to hang up strings of mango and *asoka* leaves over the doorway. Also, if it has not been done earlier, designs in liquid red clay are drawn on the walls of the compound and inside the house.

Some morning before the wedding a potter is asked to take certain pots from his own house and put them in a temple near the bride's house; and sometimes all the women go and worship the potter's wheel. (Some Hindus consider this a fertility rite, and if the child born of the marriage is deformed, they say the potter's thumb must have slipped.)

Anyhow, the women bring the pots either from the potter's house or from the temple and place these in the back room,

near the stool that bears the symbols of the fifteen goddesses. The pots are covered and put one on each side of the stool, and the bride (or her father) says: 'I give these two earthen pots to the sisters of my forefathers'. After the wedding is over, the living aunts may claim these two pots, or give them to the priests. Meanwhile thirty-six pots of sizes varying from big to very little have now to be arranged. Twelve poles are erected so as to enclose a square, three poles being put close together at each of the four corners. In the centre of each of these groups of three poles the earthen pots are arranged in four sets of nine pots standing on each other. Each pyramid of pots is tied with a string which goes from corner to corner round the square. This enclosed square, as we shall see, is used on the actual wedding day.

The astrologer is now consulted again, whilst there is still time to combat malign influences. If he finds that the planet Mars exercises an evil influence over the bridegroom, the lad will be made to wear a gold ring, set with coral, on the third finger of his right hand. If the planet Jupiter is unfavourable to the bride, certain mantras are repeated as often as nineteen thousand times, and presents are made to Brāhmans of all sorts of yellow things, such as gold, a piece of yellow cloth, or a brass begging-bowl. If, however, it proves to be the sun that unfortunately is adverse to the bridegroom, a special mantra is said six thousand times, and a gift of white things, such as silver, muslin, aluminium, or diamonds, is made to Brāhmans. (The influences are frequently found to be adverse !)

It is thought better, as a rule, when arranging a marriage, that the bride and the bridegroom should not live in the same village;<sup>1</sup> but on the day before the wedding the bridegroom and all his friends come to the bride's town. It is the prettiest sight to see in the early spring cartloads of merry children, all, like Mrs. Gilpin, on pleasure bent. The very oxen that draw the wedding cart are caparisoned with

<sup>1</sup> *Contr. Hopkins, Religions of India*, p. 270.

embroidered blankets. The wedding chariot is generally a shaky conveyance with a red-curtained dome-shaped top, and it is simply amazing how many children, all sitting cross-legged, can be packed into it. In any chief's stables there are sure to be really wonderful wedding carriages; but ordinary villagers often adapt their workaday carts very happily, sometimes erecting red coverings over them, or else just packing them as they are, brimful of children, whose bright dresses and happy faces form the most effective of all decorations. Brāhmans, however, would probably have enough influence to secure a proper wedding chariot, and the bridegroom's party usually drives up to the entrance of the bride's village in state and there takes up a strategic position in some garden or shaded field.

In the evening<sup>1</sup> the bride's father goes out to meet them in formal procession, and with much playing of instruments and singing of songs brings them to the lodgings that he has provided for them in the town.

The father of the bride provides the lodging (which must not be in his own home) and everything else the party needs, except food until the wedding. Once the wedding is over, the bridegroom and his friends come and dine in the lady's house for four and a half days, taking nine meals there.

The all-important day dawns at last, and the very first thing in the morning the family priest of the bride, helped by the astrologer, sets to work to find out the most favourable moment for the actual ceremony. To discover this they write down the name of the bride and the bridegroom, their *gotra* on both sides, and their horoscope, showing the position of the several planets; and when they have found out the exact time that the planets will be favourable, they hand the paper to the bride's father, who sprinkles it with red powder and writes the word *Śrī* on it before receiving it. He then

<sup>1</sup> Some Brāhmans, as for example Nāgara and Sārasvata, go in the evening; certain other Brāhmans, such as Audīca, go in the morning.



asks them to accept a little present varying from one to five rupees.

The bride's friends go to the lodgings of the bridegroom and his friends and pay them a visit, but are careful not to accept even an areca-nut. In return, the bridegroom's friends all come and call on the bride's relatives, and each of them is given five areca-nuts and is besprinkled with scent, which they may take without fear of reproach. They bring with them presents, such as dates, clarified butter, copper-pots, and baskets, to the value of about fourteen rupees.

The bride's maternal uncle now arrives in another procession, and he brings with him presents for his niece and her mother and the other children, such as ornaments and clothes of varying value. But whatever he forgets or remembers to give, one thing he must provide, and that is the ivory bangles for the bride to wear.

Now, if we are to understand the salient points of a wedding, particularly a Nāgara<sup>1</sup> wedding, and not get confused by the multitude of minor ceremonies, interesting as each of them is, we must grasp the idea that on their wedding day, and for at least three days after, the little bride and bridegroom represent the god Śiva and his wife Pārvatī; and we must remember that it is the many-sided god in his character as the supreme ascetic that is represented. In conformity with this idea, the bride and bridegroom fast all day, and, as we shall see later, dress in accordance with the part. They themselves take no share in the visits and return visits, but sit fasting like sages (*rṣi*) in their own homes.

These visits must all be over by twelve, for at noon the bride's relatives ask all the little children from the bridegroom's lodgings to lunch.

About three o'clock the bridegroom's party come again to the house, bringing with them clothes and gold and silver jewellery. It is quite an understood thing, in an ordinary

<sup>1</sup> Other Brāhmins, even when they do not look on their bridegrooms as Śiva, nevertheless approve the Nāgara custom.

middle-class family that the clothes should be worth about three hundred rupees, the silver ornaments about twenty-five, and the gold about five hundred. (These presents are really the settlements made by the groom on his bride and become her absolute property.)

But, as on this day the girl is to represent an ascetic and can wear none of these beautiful things, the bridegroom's friends also bring a gold ring and a special sārī of white muslin with a red border for the bride to wear during the ceremony. In order to represent Pārvatī as completely as possible, she will wear no camisole<sup>1</sup> and no skirt, but only this narrow toga-like garment of white muslin, about six to eight yards in length, which is wound round her in graceful folds.

The bride now bathes with hot water and washes her hair with *Kakkola* berries (*Myrtus Pimenta*), and (if she can be quite sure that there is no animal fat in it) she may also use scented soaps. Her hair is left loose, as it ill becomes an ascetic to adorn herself with braiding of the hair.

The water in which the bride has bathed is made the occasion for some mild horse-play. It is poured into pots, and, together with the rest of the berries and the soap (if any), is taken in procession to the bridegroom's lodgings. The women who carry it go singing all the way, and they must be accompanied either by the bride's father and mother or by the bride's elder brother and his wife. Besides the bath, they also take a piece of silver thread exactly the size of the Brāhmanical sacred thread, and (in allusion to his impersonation of the divine ascetic) sandals either of wood or metal,<sup>2</sup> and most important of all, the loin-cloth of white muslin with a red border that the bridegroom will wear during the ceremony.

The bride's women friends have great fun in trying to pour the water from her bath over the bridegroom's head. He struggles, resists, and dodges, and, after a good deal of

<sup>1</sup> On the second day she may or may not wear camisole and skirt, but she will wear the ring.

harmless and irresponsible ragging, all the bath-water is eventually poured on the ground over or near the big toe of the lad's right foot. Then red powder is rubbed on him, very likely on his hand, and the thread, gold ring, and sandals are given to him.

As soon as the bride's friends leave, the boy proceeds to get ready for another procession and bathes, probably using the bride's soap. He puts on the muslin loin-cloth the bride has sent him and wraps a rich gold scarf about his shoulders, adding some gold ornaments and a gold ring, whilst garlands are hung round his neck, wrists, and elbows.

It is after his bath that the bridegroom begins actually to represent Śiva, and, as we have seen, the bride represents Pārvatī, so that not only do the wedding guests have all the fun and frolic of a really first-class entertainment, but (oh, lucky folk!) at the same time that they are being thoroughly amused, they also acquire religious merit by venerating the gods and taking part in their wedding. As the god is being represented in his ascetic character, the bridegroom cannot wear a coat, so he confines himself to the loin-cloth, the scarf over the shoulders, and the sandals. On his head the boy wears a cardboard crown covered with gold and silver paper, on which the river Ganges is represented, as well as the half moon which the god obtained from the ocean when it was churned. The poison that Śiva drank is symbolized by a tight necklace round the bridegroom's throat placed half-way down his neck, to show that the poison did not go the whole way. The garlands he wears represent snakes.

The bride as Pārvatī wears her hair loose and the white muslin shawl, but no gold ornaments, only the ivory bangles her uncle has brought her.

In the case of other Brāhmans, such as the Audīṭa and Sārasvata, for example, though the Nāgara custom is much approved, their brides and bridegrooms do not represent Śiva and Pārvatī, and so the girl wears a white sārī, white bodice, green silk skirt, and silver rings on her toes, but no gold

ornaments, and keeps her hair loosened. Amongst them also the bridegroom wears full dress, with a lime and very often a needle in his turban to keep off the evil eye. As the bride has not to go out in the procession and face the glances of all sorts of poor and wicked people, and as moreover she is wearing no jewels, she needs no protection from the evil eye.

But to whatever caste she may belong, her father gives her an auspicious thread on which is hung one bead, generally of gold, and this she will wear continuously during her husband's lifetime.

In England the bridegroom is supported by a best man, but, in India, more sensibly than with us, it is customary for this supporter to be himself married, so that he knows exactly what to do. It is he who makes the red auspicious mark on the bridegroom's forehead, the black mark to avert the evil eye, and three red marks, one on each cheek and one on the chin.

Then comes the great procession. As a rule, if the family do not possess a mare, they will be able to borrow one, or, if not, a horse, from some chief. The bridegroom is seated on this, and a coco-nut marked with red and a four-anna piece are placed in his hand. (If it were the marriage of a ruling chief, he would be mounted on an elephant.)

Behind the bridegroom sits one of his little nieces or cousins of about eight or nine, holding in her hand a small jug. In this jug are put things that will rattle, perhaps salt in rough lumps, and small copper coins and millet grains. As she rides, the little girl shakes this over the bridegroom's head, making a fine noise. The privilege of thus riding pillion to a bridegroom is much coveted, for it brings all sorts of good luck.

The bridegroom himself has as much attention paid him as if he were a ruling chief; for an umbrella as an ensign of rank is held over him, and the best man fans him, and attendants walk beside the richly caparisoned horse, which moves slowly

round the town, its paces being so timed that the whole procession may reach the bride's house some twenty minutes before the sun sets. Very often the state band is lent, and all the folk in the procession give themselves up to the delights of music and singing.

Immediately behind the bridegroom's horse walks his own mother, carrying in her hand a stand of tiny lamps in which cotton seeds are burning. The mother wears two sārīs, a thing which is only done on great days of high ritual, such as the times when śrāddha is performed, or some great sacrifice offered. Sometimes she scatters salt as she walks, in order that any harshness or roughness in the bridegroom's temper may from henceforth be dispersed.

After her come all the women relatives of the bridegroom, and even the widows, in some families, are allowed to join the procession, provided that they do not try and take a conspicuous part.

In due course the *cortège* with all imaginable music and rejoicing reaches the bride's house. There, in front of the door, a red square of plastered clay has been made on the ground, in the centre of which there is a wooden stool, and on this the bridegroom mounts.

The bride's mother, or, if she be a widow, the bride's aunt, comes out of the house, bearing a trayful of what look like children's toys. As a matter of fact, the tray holds models of all sorts of agricultural and domestic implements: a plough, a winnowing-fan, a yoke, a pestle and mortar, a churning-rod, a needle, a stalk of millet, and also four balls, two of which are made of ashes and two of rice.

The woman waves all these over the boy's head and gives the models to his mother, but the four balls she throws to the four points of the compass, in order to remove all the lad's cares and troubles.

The bridegroom is then worshipped as the representative of the god *Śiva*. A lamp is brought filled with red powder and clarified butter, in which four crossed wicks are burning, and

this is waved three or four times in front of his face, whilst the priest recites mantras.

After receiving the models, the bridegroom's mother has to retire to her lodging and wait there till the rites are completed and the feasting has begun. The reason for this retirement is that other people fear lest her overwhelming joy at seeing her dear son so happily married should drive her mad! (This precaution is not observed in England, where it is unusual for a mother-in-law to be so pleased with her son's choice as to endanger her reason!)

As soon as the poor mother-in-law is banished, a curtain of any colour save black is brought and held in front of the bridegroom, and the maternal uncle of the bride brings her in his arms and deposits her on the other side of the curtain.

The bride may not see her groom's face yet, but at this point she is allowed to see the big toe of his right foot, on which she promptly makes a red mark and so intimates that she is worshipping the feet of a god. Whilst this is being done, the priest again murmurs mantras.

Now it comes to the turn of the boy's mother-in-law to make the red auspicious mark on his forehead and stick some rice grains on it. Boy or god, the mother-in-law is out for a lark (for nothing will ever make a Brāhman lady a prig), and so, while she is doing this and moving her hand three times round the god's face, she seeks an opportunity to pull that divinity's nose.

Wise women in England say that the sure sign of a weak man is his terror lest in public (whatever may be the real case in private) he should appear to be ruled or even counselled by his wife, and, as our literature<sup>1</sup> shows, it has always been a matter, half of jest, half of anxiety, as to whether or no a man is the master in his own house. The old jest holds just as good in India, where a wife's and mother's influence (generally exercised against any innovations) is enormous, and

<sup>1</sup> Cp. *The Proude Wyves' Paternoster*, *The Taming of the Shrew*.

a great deal of the by-play in an Indian wedding is directed to finding out which of the young couple will 'wear the breeches'. The bridegroom accordingly exercises all his skill to defend his nose from his mother-in-law's assaults, for if she succeed, he will just be a hen-pecked man for all his married days! When the assembled company have had their fill of this and similar jests, water is brought and sprinkled before the bridegroom to purify his way to the wedding booth. Two earthen lamp-holders tied with cotton and filled with rice, betel-leaf, and pice have previously been coloured red and placed beside his path, and whatever happens, the boy must not forget to stamp on these and break them to powder, for if he fail, it is a further sign of weakness, and his wife will assuredly rule over him.

It is worth stopping here a moment to notice the costumes of the parents. The bride's father or his representative is dressed in a silk loin-cloth and wears a silk scarf over his shoulders. The bride's mother has on a red silk sārī, which, unless at another daughter's wedding, can never be worn again. Over this she wears a scarf representing a second sārī, and as much jewellery (nose-ring, bracelets, anklets, &c.), as ever she likes.

Outside the wedding booth six seats are arranged. They are really footstools, but the cushions on them must be covered with wool, not cotton. These are reserved for the special guests, even the bridegroom's father sitting on an ordinary seat.

Standing opposite these six empty seats, the bridegroom receives the great worship—the *Madhuparka*—which can only be paid to six human beings: an ācārya (a spiritual preceptor), the performer of a sacrifice, a bridegroom, a king, a snātaka (a duly initiated Brāhman), or the most dearly loved relative. So great is the honour conferred by this worship, that, however often in the year a king or an ācārya may come to a man's house, only once in the twelve months can this homage be paid to him. (One shrinks from imagining

the emotions which the preliminaries of this worship would raise in the breast of an ordinary British paterfamilias, already sufficiently annoyed at parting with a favourite daughter and at the frequent calls on his purse.)

Nowadays the worship is somewhat as follows. The girl's mother stands at the right hand of her husband, and beside her is the family priest. The bride's father takes the coco-nut from the bridegroom's hand and is then asked to meditate on Gaṇeśa. This done, he says to the boy: 'Taking water in my hand, I worship the bridegroom who has come to my house'; and after sipping the water, he throws it down into a copper dish. Then he says to the boy in Sanskrit through the priest: 'Please take the seat most convenient to you, that I may worship you'.

The groom replies: 'I will sit; please worship me'. Twenty-five blades of darbha-grass have been plaited together, and these are now handed to the boy, but, as they are passed to him, great care is taken that they do not point to the south, the abode of the god of death. The priest then says three times, still in Sanskrit: 'Here is a seat'.

The father-in-law says: 'Take the seat', and the bridegroom replies: 'I take the seat', and goes on to make this astounding declaration: 'I am the best of all persons of my age. I accept the worship'—(a sentence which in England would assuredly cost him his bride, if not his life! Though of course the poor lad only means to say: 'You have not made a mistake in choosing me!').

He then puts down the darbha-grass on the stool provided for him and sits on it, with his feet on the ground and his face towards the east. The bride's mother and father also take their seats, and one corner of that lady's sārī is filled with rice and pice and tied to the end of her husband's scarf, which holds betel-leaf and rice.

Water is next poured into the auspicious cavity of the bridegroom's hand (the hand is partly closed and filled with water poured as near as possible to the root of the third



finger of the right hand). With this water he must symbolize the bathing of his feet by washing, first his right toe, and then his other toes,<sup>1</sup> and another plant of darbha-grass is then put under his feet.

A peculiarly shaped copper spoon, with a sort of trough running from ladle to handle, is filled with water, in which are mingled rice, incense, and either red powder or sandalwood. The priest says the word *Argha* (an offering) three times, and the girl's father offers the spoon to the boy, who says 'I take it', and receives it into his hands. He then raises it in both hands to his head, saying at the same time: 'O water, I send you back to the ocean from which you sprang. Remove all other difficulties lying in my path': and as he speaks, he pours the water from the spoon, which is still held between his joined hands, into a copper plate lying in front of him.

The priest next repeats three times over the words: 'Take and sip this water', and, as he speaks, he takes water already sanctified by mantras from a cup, and pours it by means of a little spoon into the bridegroom's right hand. The boy supports this hand by sticking the first finger of the left hand against the fleshy side of the right hand that lies under the little finger, and drinks the water, saying: 'O water, give me fame, give me radiancy of face; may I be popular, the owner of cattle and free from disease'; and then he takes three more ritual sips.

All this, however, has only been preliminary to the essential Madhuparka, which now follows. To prepare for it, two smaller bronze vessels are placed mouth against mouth (so that they look a little like a dumb-bell), and put inside a big bronze vessel. In the lower of the two small vessels clarified butter and honey<sup>2</sup> have already been placed, together with some curds and small silver coins. The bride's long-suffering

<sup>1</sup> Other castes wash other toes first.

<sup>2</sup> Of course in unequal proportions, since, if clarified butter and honey are mixed exactly 'half and half', the resultant mixture is a virulent poison!

father holds the big bronze vessels containing these two smaller pots in his hands, whilst the priest says three times: 'Take this Madhuparka'. The bridegroom replies 'I accept it'; but before actually receiving it, he is careful to take the couple of jars out of the big one and, putting the lower one on the top, he examines it warily, for, if there should be any ants or other insects in the honey, he would be committing a grave sin in accepting it. (Any old resident in India can bear witness how easily ants find their way into honey!) However, if there be no trace of insect life, he accepts the offering, and while doing so expresses as pretty a sentiment as any man, English or Indian, can feel on his wedding day: 'I look upon you and everything that breathes as my friend. May they all look on me as their friend!'

He then takes the pot in his left hand and, holding a silver coin between the tips of the third finger and thumb of his right hand, he stirs the mixture. Three times he throws away some of the contents, and three times he eats some of it, bestowing some of the remainder on his younger friends, and throwing the rest away towards the east in such a manner that it will not get trodden on or hurt.

This is followed by the ritual sipping of water. Then the bridegroom takes some water in his left hand and, putting a little of it to his mouth with the fingers of his right hand, says: 'Let there be good speech in my mouth'. His nose is next consecrated, and touching first his right nostril and then his left, he says: 'Let there be breath in my nose'; applying the water to his ears, he says: 'Let my two ears have the power of hearing'; touching each eye, he prays: 'Let my two eyes have the power of seeing'; and applying water in the same way, he goes on to desire that his arms may have strength, and his legs power for walking; till finally, moving his hand from his head to his feet, he prays: 'Let every part of my body have strength'.

The whole Madhuparka ceremony ends, as so many Indian rites do, with the gift of a cow. Sometimes a real live cow is

kept tied to the booth, ready to be presented at this point by the bride's father to the bridegroom. If this be the case, the boy accepts it and says to the animal: 'Go to my house and eat grass'. But what is more likely to happen is that the father-in-law simply gives the price of a cow, conventionally fixed at five rupees<sup>1</sup> for an ordinary householder, and one rupee for a very poor man.

The Madhuparka ceremony being completed by the gift of a cow, the gift of the bride follows. In this, as in every other part of the proceedings, there are a good many local variations. The part of it that is especially interesting to English readers is that not only, as with us, does the father give the bride away, but that the mother associates herself with him in that gift; after all, the child is hers as much as his, and it is interesting to note that the Hindus recognized that fact before we did.

And now to examine the rite in detail: we saw that the little bride was brought in veiled in the arms of her maternal uncle, and seated on a stool beside the bridegroom, though separated from him by a curtain. The Śāstrīs say that her stool ought to be placed opposite to the bridegroom, so that she faces the west; but, as a matter of fact, the stool is nearly always put beside that of the bridegroom, so that she faces east. Again, according to the Scriptures, some eight special verses of blessing ought to be read to the bride and bridegroom at this point in the proceedings, and whilst they are being read rice<sup>2</sup> grains should be thrown over the pair. Nowadays this seldom or never takes place at Nāgara weddings and is very rare amongst other Brāhmins.

Up to this a curtain has usually separated the bridegroom from his bride and prevented his seeing her,<sup>3</sup> but now it is

<sup>1</sup> This means nowadays a saving of anything from fifteen to forty rupees.

<sup>2</sup> Hindus are always interested to compare with this the Western habit of rice-throwing at weddings.

<sup>3</sup> The curtain is not essential: for instance the Nāgara do not ordinarily use it, but it is fairly general amongst other Brāhmins.

removed, and the happy pair look at each other, and if one of them takes a violent dislike to the other at sight, he or she can retract: the marriage is not yet indissoluble.

Whilst they are looking at each other, the priest puts a fire of burning charcoal into the square fenced in with the string and the earthen pots, to the north-east of where they have been sitting. During all the remaining wedding ceremonies this fire must never be allowed to go out, or some misfortune will happen. The Scriptures ordain that this fire should be kindled by rubbing sticks together, but as a matter of convenience it is actually just brought from the bride's house. In the old days some of this fire was taken to the young people's new home, and from it the fire on their domestic hearth was kindled; but this is done nowadays only by Brāhmans who are *Agnihotrī*.<sup>1</sup> At this stage, too, the special clothes to be donned by the bride and bridegroom used to be offered to them, but it proved so much more convenient for the young couple to put them on at the beginning of the wedding, that that is now almost invariably done, though the bridegroom still at this point says to the lady: 'O bride, wear this garment. May you live a hundred years. I, too, don my cloth for fame, long life, and wisdom.'

The anointing of the two used to follow, and some Brāhmans do anoint the pair at this point with yellow powder, turmeric, pulse, and scented oil.

In any case the washing of the feet now follows. The mother and father of the bride wash the big toe of the right foot<sup>2</sup> of both bride and groom, first with water, then with milk, and then with water again; after which they dry them, mark them with the auspicious red mark, and put rice and flowers and red and white powder on them. All this is done by other Brāhmans as well as Nāgara, and they explain that they also are worshipping the couple as Śiva and Pārvatī

<sup>1</sup> See ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> Here again it is interesting to compare the reverence done in India to the big toe with that shown to the toe of the Pope at Rome.

at this point, even though the two are not distinctly dressed for the part, as they are with the Nāgara.

The homage is continued, for after they have washed their feet, the parents apply drops of the water used for washing<sup>1</sup> to their own eyes and put it on their heads. This done, the mother and father must wash their own hands (since they have touched feet), and then they make the red mark on the foreheads of the pair and put grains of rice on the mark.

They next present the boy and girl with certain vessels, which they will find useful in their new life. The biggest is usually a great pot of copper or German silver for holding bath-water, and there is another for milk, besides several smaller ones for ordinary purposes. Sometimes the bride and bridegroom exchange garlands, but this is not done amongst the Nāgara.

The father now takes water in his right hand, and holds it in the cavity below the second and third finger, keeping his first finger bent and his little finger stuck stiffly out. The priest recites the day and date by saying: 'On Wednesday (or whatever the day may be) of the bright half of the month (so and so) of the (astrological) year (Śālivāhana) in order to perfect my gift of the bride I give these things to the bridegroom', and as the priest speaks, the father holds the water in his hand, and then pours it into a brass vessel. This is called the Golden Śrāddha (*Hiranyāśrāddha*).

Meanwhile the mother puts her hand on the right shoulder of the father to show that they jointly make the gift. Now follows the actual gift. The father takes water in his hand in the same way as he did before, and the priest again recites the date, but then goes on to say (and the father repeats the words after him): 'This girl, being adorned according to my ability, wearing ivory bangles and no metal, having tied the madana fruit, giving fruits, making provision for her with gold accord-

<sup>1</sup> In the same way devotees during their evening worship in temples often put drops of water in which the idol has been washed to their eyes or to their lips.

ing to my power, she being healthy and possessing the features, &c., prescribed in the Scriptures, in order to elevate my one-hundred-and-one families as long as the sun and the moon continue to shine, and for the purpose of begetting children, I bestow such a bride on the bridegroom who resembles Prajāpati.' Whilst saying this, the girl's father puts the right hand of the bride, which is filled with rice, silver or gold, water, and darbha-grass, on to the right hand of the bridegroom 'as though on to a throne'.

The bride's mother, putting rice and red powder into a bell-metal pot, which she is about to give to the bridegroom, says: 'I also give', and until she says these words, the bride is not given. Meanwhile the priest recites the *gotra* of both bride and bridegroom to prove that they are not within the prohibited<sup>1</sup> degrees. He mentions the great-grandfather, the grandfather, and the father of the boy and of the girl, and then says: 'I bestow the bride on the great-grandson of so and so, of the . . . *gotra* of the . . . Veda and of the . . . Śākḥā'.

With certain Brāhmans the gift of the bride must take place at sunset and be completed before the sun has passed more than half-way down to the horizon. A man is specially stationed to watch the sun, and he rings a bell when the exact moment comes for making the gift.

The rest of the proceedings are not supposed to be so entrancing as to endanger the sanity of the bridegroom's mother, so at this stage the bride's mother is dispatched to bring her. Arrived at the lodging, the girl's mother embraces the boy's mother, and then salutes her by bowing down to her feet.<sup>2</sup>

This formidable dame comes wearing a sort of crown made

<sup>1</sup> Once, at least, within recent years in Kāthiāwār, when the *gotra* were recited, it was perceived that the pair were near of kin, and amidst endless fuss the wedding was broken off, but the bride was not considered a widow.

<sup>2</sup> Another point of difference between East and West that always interests Hindus is that with us it is the bride's mother who is the mother-in-law to be feared, conciliated, and revered; with them the alarming lady, 'the SHE-who-is-to-be-obeyed', is the bridegroom's mother.

## THE LIFE STORY OF A BRĀHMAN

plantain leaves decorated with gold paper and tinsel. It is usually round or triangular in shape, and in the case of wealthy people the crown is often adorned with real pearls.

When she sees her daughter-in-law, she takes off the extra *rī* of ceremony and presents it to her.

Some Brāhmans hold that of all the multifarious ceremonies that can be performed in connexion with a wedding only ten are essential; these are: the feet-washing, honey-sipping, coin-throwing, date-naming, present-making, clothes-donning, rice-giving, oath-taking, seven steps, and feeding. It will never even the most industrious student of modern Hinduism count up how many of these ceremonies we have worked through, for by now we are in the middle of the bride-giving and have arrived at the important point of thread-tying.

A string is prepared made of twenty-four threads of white cotton, each of which is in length four times the length of the bridegroom's or the bride's forearm, and this the priest puts like a chain round the neck of both bride and groom. Precisians say that a twofold strand of cotton ought to be wound seven times round the waist of the bride and groom and five times round their necks, and this is still done by certain Dakṣaṇī Brāhmans.) Once the bride and groom have taken their seats, they ought not to move at all till the priest gives permission, so the priest is supposed to look at them when they are seated, measure with his eye the distance they are from each other, and then make the thread exactly the requisite length. As a matter of fact, however, the cord is prepared beforehand, and they do gently move nearer or farther apart to suit it.

We have noticed the bride and bridegroom's costumes; at this point, whilst he is arranging the thread, we may stay to observe the priest's. He wears the auspicious red turban and has the red mark on his forehead, and his white loin-cloth has a red border. His coat is white, but his scarf of ceremony is very likely to be red, though it may be any auspicious color.

such as pink or yellow, provided it is neither black, blue, nor white.

We saw the parents' clothes knotted together; in the same way one corner of the bride's sārī, containing a small silver coin, some rice, and some red powder, is tied to an end of the bridegroom's scarf holding rice and areca-nut.

Then the bride's parents say: 'We give this daughter: you accept her'. The bridegroom says: 'I accept this bride. May you be blessed.' Here he uses the word *Svasti*, which, as it is the ordinary word used in returning thanks for a gift, is never employed by the Nāgara, who never accept gifts,<sup>1</sup> save on this occasion. Then the priest (in default of the bridegroom, who does not usually know the words!) says: 'O bride, you are given by heaven: let earth accept you'. After this the bride's father, joining his hands together, beseeches the bridegroom to act in unison with the bride in their religious duties, worldly business, passion, and all enjoyment. 'Do not', the father goes on to urge, 'act against her wishes, for she is the giver of all your welfare; but above all, perform all your religious rites together.'<sup>2</sup> The bridegroom replies: 'I will not act contrary to her wishes'. And the girl's father says: 'May I always have brides at my side, that by giving them in marriage I may attain salvation'.

This is followed by the blessing. The father kneels with the left knee bent and the right on the ground, and holding a copper vessel on his right shoulder. This vessel is filled with water, and in it are five mango or *asoka* leaves, betel-leaf, rice, red powder, flowers, a coco-nut, and some silver coins. The

<sup>1</sup> So particular are the Nāgara never to receive alms, that teachers in schools are not permitted by the caste to receive even scarves of honour at the school prize-givings.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to a very noteworthy custom amongst Brāhmins, though but little known to Europeans, which compels a husband to do much of his worship with his wife at his side. It is a beautiful parallel to the Christian ideal of husband and wife being 'heirs together of the grace of life', that the Brāhman wife is called her husband's *Sahadharmātārīṇī* (She who helps in the fulfilment of duties). So necessary is a wife's presence when sacrificing, that Rāma, when he had sent Sītā away, was obliged to make a golden image of her to keep at his side when worshipping.



priest repeats mantras of blessing over the pair and sprinkles them with one of the leaves dipped in water. Then, turning to the bride, he says: 'Don't look at your husband with rage in your eyes,' get rid of such signs as give your husband pain. Take care of the cattle. Be of nice mind and of cheerful countenance. May your sons be brave. Be full of love to God. Bring good fortune to men and animals.'

Then, mentioning his wife's name for the one and only time in his life, the bridegroom says: 'May the god Hiranyaparna (an epithet of Viṣṇu) make Tārā (or whatever the wife's name is) devoted to me'.

The priest, in default of the bridegroom, says: 'Soma gave this girl to Gandharva, Gandharva gave her to Agni, and Agni gave her to me, together with wealth and sons. Wealth and sons Agni will give me'; and then turning to the fire, he says: 'May I treat her as my wife'.

Whilst under the guardianship of the gods, they believe, the ward was dowered by Soma, the god of the moon, with coolness, chastity, forgiveness, and moon-like beauty; by Gandharva, the god of music, with a sweet voice, skill to play on musical instruments, and a harmonious temper; whilst Agni, the fire, taught her to be as serviceable as is fire and endued her with its special qualities of brightness and quickness.

She will remain still under the protection of the gods for some three days longer, and so must observe celibacy at least for that period. As we noticed earlier, it was because the child was the ward successively for two years of each of these three gods that she could not be married until she was six.

This ends the gift of the bride. At its completion at least two fortunate women, one of whom is related to the bride and the other to the bridegroom, go up to the happy pair and wish them good luck and throw coloured grains of rice over their heads; and then, to take away any ill luck that may befall the

<sup>1</sup> The Brāhmins are very indignant at Dr. Oldenberg's use here in his translation (*S. B. E.* xxix, p. 278, par. 16) of the term 'evil eye', which they declare never to be the property of a Twice-born.

couple, these women crack their knuckles against their own temples.

At the conclusion, the bride and bridegroom go into the house and enter that room at the back where earlier we saw Gaṇeśa and fifteen goddesses installed. Both girl and boy offer a coco-nut and a silver coin worth at least four annas. In the case of Nāgara, the priest then conducts the worship of these deities, which takes about fifteen minutes, whilst the couple sit on special stools in front. With certain other Brāhmans, the pair conduct their own worship. Seated in front of the gods, the bridegroom offers his wife some gold or silver; then they break the coco-nut, a few pieces are given to Gaṇeśa, and the rest to children.

This done, the bridegroom seizes the bride's hand in such a way as to enclose in his own not only all her fingers but also the thumb (the inclusion of the thumb is most important, as it ensures the birth of sons!), and leads her to the square which had been fenced off by string and water-pots, and in which we saw the fire placed. The girl and boy circumambulate this fire once, and then sit to the west of it on darbha-grass. Then the bridegroom says: 'I have received this girl as my bride; to confirm her as my wife, I shall now offer sacrifice to the Fire'. Thereupon the bride, as a true fellow-worshipper with her husband, puts her hand beneath his, whilst he makes the offerings to the fire. The priest repeats mantras, and the husband pours clarified butter into the flames; first to four gods: i. e. Prajāpati, Indra, Agni, and Soma; and then, to atone for any defilement accidentally acquired, or for any mistakes which have been made during the ceremony, he also offers melted butter to Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya, Agni-Varuṇa, Sāvitrī, Viṣṇu, Viśvedevāḥ, Marutaḥ, Svāhā, and Varuṇa.

These preliminary offerings are followed by another series of sacrifices (*Rāṣṭra-bhṛit-homa*), whose object is to fit the bridegroom for the duties of a householder; he pours clarified butter into the fire in honour of divinities, such as Gandharva, Oṣadhī, and Apsarā.

A second series of offerings to the fire (*Yaya-homa*) wins bodily strength for the young husband ; and this is followed by a third succession of offerings (*Abhyātāna*) with the object of gaining the protection of certain gods, such as Indra, Agni, and Yama. It is a highly dramatic moment when the offering is made to the dread god of death and judgement. The bridegroom himself cannot perform it, but a curtain is drawn, behind which the priest makes the offering, and then water is sprinkled on the head of the bridegroom, to purify him and to protect him from the inauspiciousness that the very mention of Yama has created.

The succeeding set of offerings (*Lājāhoma*) is a beautiful symbol of that pure and passionless love which has been called the most disinterested of all affection, the love uniting a brother and sister. The bride's brother approaches and pours into his little sister's joined hands parched grains (*lājā*), husked rice, and *śamī* leaves,<sup>1</sup> the bridegroom meanwhile putting his arm round her shoulder and his hand underneath her hand.<sup>2</sup> (Failing a brother, a cousin has to act.) Then, first looking carefully at the fire to see that it is not smoking, for of course no offering of any kind can ever be made to a smoking fire,<sup>3</sup> the bride pours the contents of her hands by degrees into the fire three times.

The first time she says : 'May the god Aryamā never separate me from my husband'. The second time she prays : 'May my husband and my kinsfolk have long lives' ; and she asks at the third offering : 'May we win the love of each other. May Agni grant it.' In the palm of the bride's hand are now put an areca-nut, a betel-leaf, and four annas, and the bridegroom grasps it (again folding in the thumb to obtain

<sup>1</sup> *Prosopis spicigera*. These are the leaves worshipped at the Dasarā festival.

<sup>2</sup> A girl feels it dreadfully if she has no brother to play this part, and her grief is pathetic if he has recently died.

<sup>3</sup> Flames are the mouth in which Agni receives an offering, and until the flames appear, the mouth of the god is not in the fire. Smoke, too, is the sign of the anger of the god, and when he is in that mood he receives no offering. Cf. Psalm lxxiv. 1.

sons), and together they circumambulate the fire, going towards the right to show that *Lājāhoma* has been done.

Before the preceding sacrifice was begun, a large stone had been set up in the north-east of the enclosed square. Beside the stone on a low wooden stool were placed two pieces of cloth, a white one holding rice and a red one containing wheat; the top of the stone was reddened with red lead, and at its side two coco-nuts were arranged. This stone is believed, by the Nāgara at least, to represent Pārvatī. The bride now approaches the stone and touches it with her foot, or rather the bridegroom stoops down, and taking the bride's toe in his hand, touches the stone with it. This is a noticeable epoch in the life of the girl; hitherto she, like all other children, had freely touched the auspicious red powder made of turmeric, &c.; but now her toe actually comes into contact with the red lead which is on the stone, a substance she has never been allowed to touch before.

On the wooden stool beside this stone we must also notice a copper pot of water, into which have been put five different kinds of leaves, besides an areca-nut, a pice, unbroken rice, and some turmeric powder. This vessel and its contents represent Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Lakṣmī, and Pārvatī, as well as the nine planets and the ten guardians of the quarters.

As the bridegroom touches the stone with the bride's toe, he says to her, after varying introductory sentences, the important words: 'I am strong, you are strong. I am the sky, you are the earth. We shall both wear the yoke<sup>1</sup> of life together. Let us have many sons. May they be long-lived and prudent. May we be loved by all. May we have cheerful countenances and liberal minds. May our eyesight last a hundred years, may we live a hundred years and be able to hear good things for a hundred years. Be firm as a stone. Make a firm stand against the six interior foes.<sup>2</sup> The four gods, Bhaga, Aryamā,

<sup>1</sup> Before the ceremony commences, a yoke is placed near the seats of the bride and bridegroom.

<sup>2</sup> These are: unbridled passion, anger, arrogance, infatuation, covetousness, envy.

Savitā, Purandhi, have given you to me that I may live as a householder.'

Then the bridegroom and his wife walk round the fire till they reach their seats. It is worth noticing the precedence: as a rule, the wife walks meekly behind her husband, but on this (as on the occasion of every other religious rite) the wife precedes her lord. When their seats are reached, the bride stands to the right and the groom to the left, and verses of blessing are read.

Then twice more they circumambulate the fire, touching the stone and saying exactly the same words.

On the fourth round, the brother pours the rest of the parched grain out of a winnowing fan into the hands of his sister, and she offers it to the fire in absolute silence.<sup>1</sup> This time, when the stone is reached, the bridegroom walks ahead of the bride till they reach the seat, when they change stools, the bride sitting where the groom had been, and vice versa; but they do not hurry to do this, for here again the old *plaisanterie* crops up. Whoever sits first will be the ruled over, and whoever takes his seat last is to be the dominant partner.

Before proceeding to study the next rite, the all-important seven steps, we might look for a minute at an interesting divergence of belief about the stone. We saw that the Nāgara held that it represented Pārvatī, but some other Brāhmins say it represents Gaṇeśa, and others again the Guardian of Boundaries (Kṣetrapāla, an epithet of Śiva). These last say that, if the young couple do not hit it off well as the years go on, the reason for their quarrels must be that Kṣetrapāla has not given up his rights over the wife. So they all go to some field at the boundary of the village, and there they make four heaps of earth, enclosing a square, and put a reddened stone in the middle. The husband and wife, as it were, start afresh and circumambulate the stone four times, hoping thereby to propitiate the god.

This is an exceedingly shrewd way of making up quarrels

<sup>1</sup> *Contr.* Oldenberg, *S. B. E.* xxix, p. 283, par. 5.

between young married people; and if it could be introduced into England should save many separations. Nobody is blamed; nobody even inquires into the reason for the disputes, and so nobody interferes between the husband and wife. The whole blame is put on a god outside the domestic machine, and the young folk are given the chance of an entirely new start. The objectivity of the ceremony would help them; at the same time the publicity of it all would make them not over-anxious to quarrel again.

Then follows the all-important rite of taking the seven steps. Until these seven steps are consummated, the bridegroom has no rights over the bride; indeed, if he died before they were all taken, the bride would not be looked upon as having been married, and therefore, not being widowed, could marry another man.

(It must be remembered that, as in the case of the honey-sipping, which we saw was not confined to a wedding, but was an act of profound homage that could be rendered on other fit occasions, so the taking of the seven steps is not only the making of a solemn bond of union between husband and wife, but is done when any two friends desire to swear eternal union. Students at college and boys at school, who want to be lifelong friends, nowadays take seven steps ceremonially round a fire, and the story runs in the Rāmāyaṇa that when Rāma formed an alliance with the monkey king Sugrīva, they sealed the compact by stepping seven times round the fire.)

We shall see that after each of the steps they call Viṣṇu as witness. He is the protector of the Universe and takes more interest in looking after young married people than does the god Śiva, the usual deity of the Brāhmins.<sup>1</sup> Seven small heaps of rice are made in a straight line from south to north of the fire (they are made to the north, because it is there that the seven Ṛṣis are); and on each heap are arranged seven

<sup>1</sup> It is because a king like Viṣṇu should be a protection to the earth that every ruling chief, on coming to the throne, is looked on as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and so, whatever may be his own particular sect, on the day of his installation his forehead is marked with the symbol of Viṣṇu.

areca-nuts, seven pice, and seven dates. The bridegroom says : ' I will worship these seven heaps, which represent the seven ancient mountains, with the fivefold worship '.

In the old days the bride, accompanied by the groom, took seven actual steps from heap to heap ; nowadays, however, whilst sitting, she contents herself with sticking out her toe and touching each separate heap after the appropriate sentence. For instance, the bridegroom says : ' Take one step with me, and I promise to feed you as long as you live : Viṣṇu is witness ' ; and the bride touches the first heap with her toe.

' Take a second step with me ', the boy says again, ' and I promise to behave in such a way that your face shall always shine with inward health : Viṣṇu is witness ' ; and the girl touches the second heap.

' Take a third step with me, and I will give you wealth, prosperity, and the luxuries that can be bought with wealth : Viṣṇu is witness.'

' Take a fourth step with me ; I will be answerable for your well-being : Viṣṇu is witness.'

' Take a fifth step with me ; I will see that you have cattle : Viṣṇu is witness.'

' Take a sixth step with me ; I promise to pay you my dues as your husband at the right seasons : Viṣṇu is witness.'

Then finally and beautifully he says : ' O friend, take the seventh step with me and become my friend in reality and follow me '.<sup>1</sup>

At the time when the rite of the seven steps is being performed, a Brāhman stands to the south of the fire, holding a water-vessel, and when the ceremony is completed, he sprinkles water from it over the young husband and wife with a mango leaf ; or sometimes the husband himself sprinkles it over his wife, whilst the priest recites mantras of blessing.

<sup>1</sup> All the paṇḍits whom the writer has consulted disagree with Dr. Oldenberg's translation of the *sūtra* concerning the seven steps : ' One for sap, two for juice, three for the prospering of wealth, four for comfort, five for cattle, six for the seasons. Friend ! be with seven steps (united to me). So be thou devoted to me.' *S. B. E.* xxix, p. 283.

If the wedding takes place by day, the newly made husband asks his wife to look at the sun; if it is not over till the evening, at the pole-star. Whilst they are gazing, they each hold in their hands a silver coin and a coco-nut marked with the auspicious dot.

If it is the sun that they are looking at, they say: 'May we be able to gaze at the sun for one hundred autumns;<sup>1</sup> the sun which is the eye of the Creator, which does good to gods, and which rises brilliantly in the east. May we live and hear the praises of the sun for one hundred years. May we never for one hundred years need to beg from others, and may we live for more than a hundred years.'

If, however, they are gazing at the sky at night, the husband says to his wife: 'Look at the pole-star'. Whether she can see it or not, she must say: 'I see the star', on which the bridegroom asks: 'Are you sure that you have seen the pole-star?' The Sanskrit word for pole-star means 'firmly fixed' or 'faithful', so it would be unlucky for the bride to say that she could not see it; accordingly, whether she has distinguished it or not, she again says that she sees it.

The bridegroom replies: 'Thou art faithful; I regard thee as faithful; be thou faithful to me and to those whom I provide for. Bṛihaspati gave thee to me; gain children through me, your husband, and live for a hundred autumns.'

After they have looked at either the sun or the pole-star, they return to their seats, and the bridegroom, putting his hand four times on the right shoulder of the bride, repeats four different sentences. At the end of each of these sentences he lays his hand on his own heart (in strict accord with the best histrionic tradition!).

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Griswold for the following references:

'Grant unto us to see a hundred autumns.' *R. V. II. 27*<sup>10</sup>.

'Give us a hundred autumns for our lifetime.' *R. V. III. 36*<sup>10</sup>.

'A hundred autumns may we see that bright eye.' *R. V. VII. 66*<sup>18</sup>.

'May they survive a hundred lengthened autumns.' *R. V. X. 18*<sup>4</sup>.

'A hundred autumns let him live.' *R. V. 85*<sup>39</sup> (from the great wedding hymn).

'Live waxing in thy strength a hundred autumns.' *R. V. X. 161*<sup>4</sup>.



The first time he does this he says: 'In every vow I take I shall consult thy heart'; the second time: 'Let thy mind follow my mind'; next: 'Willingly and lovingly obey my words'; and lastly: 'May Prajāpati unite thee to me for the sake of children'.

This done, the husband says to the 'lucky women' who are standing near: 'O happy women, go to my bride, look at her and wish her good luck'. Four different times different women circumambulate the young wife, carrying husked rice in the corner of their sārīs. When one has completed the first round, she gives the girl a little rice and whispers in her right ear (being very careful meanwhile not to put her hand on the bride's head): 'May you experience the good fortune of Indra and Indrāṇī'. The girl in return gives the lucky women five areca-nuts. Then another woman steps forward, and after having walked round the bride and given her the rice, whispers: 'May you have the good luck of Kṛiṣṇa and Rukmiṇī' or 'of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī', and receives in her turn the five areca-nuts. The same process is repeated in the case of the third woman, who whispers: 'I wish you the good fortune of Brahmā and Sāvitrī'; and the fourth woman prays that they may know the happiness of Śiva and Pārvatī.

It is interesting to notice that no one wishes them the happiness of Rāma and Sītā, because, through her husband's mistrust, poor Sītā experienced terrible unhappiness,<sup>1</sup> and some also say that because Rāma is the god called on at the time of death, it would be unlucky to take his name now at a wedding.

Next, the bride's mother brings a bronze plate, containing some red powder, wheat, and sugar, in the one hand, and in the other some clarified butter in a sort of teapot. She puts both hands loosely together, and then dribbles four handfuls of this red mixture out between her little fingers<sup>2</sup> on to an empty plate which was in the special square.

<sup>1</sup> This is the reason why so few Brāhmanas call their children Sītā.

<sup>2</sup> It must always be remembered that gifts to men are thus given from

The bride's mother is wearing on her head a triangle of plantain leaves decorated with gold, and she now holds an auspicious lamp in one hand, makes the auspicious dot on the forehead of both husband and wife, and sticks rice grains on to it.

At this point the young couple should properly take their seats on a red bull's hide, but as this is the Degenerate Age (*Kaliyuga*), they just have to do the best they can and be content with seats of darbha-grass.

The husband puts some of the mixture from the plate into the fire, saying: 'Take away whatever vices there may be in my wife'.

Then he takes another morsel from the plate and asks his bride to eat it. This is noteworthy as being the only time in their lives when husband and wife can share the unifying sacrament of a common meal. Unfortunately in some parts of India the bride is so closely veiled all through the ceremony that she cannot do more than make a feint of eating; but amongst those Brāhmans who do not veil their brides so closely the wife does really eat now with her husband, and continues to do so for the three or four days of the wedding festivities.

However, whether the bride actually eats or only pretends to do so, the husband, as he offers the first mouthful, says: 'I give you this morsel and unite my life with yours'. With the second morsel: 'I unite my bones with your bones'. Then: 'I unite my flesh with your flesh';<sup>1</sup> and again 'I unite my skin with your skin'. So closely does this symbolized feast unite them, that the wife is considered to be the half of her husband's body. It is not at all difficult therefore for a Brāhman to understand the Christian mystic belief in the union wrought by the great Common Meal of Holy Communion.

between the two hands; gifts to gods are poured out from the flattened palms over the finger tips; and offerings to the dead are poured outwards by the side of the thumbs.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'. Genesis ii. 23.

The bridegroom then touches the bride's right shoulder and, putting his hand back to his heart, says: 'O Lady of the sweetly divided hair,<sup>1</sup> I know the tenderness and the moon-like purity of your heart. May that heart know my heart.'

The wife then in silence gives four morsels to her husband to eat.

The plate which has held the material for the common meal is now cleared, and some milk and red powder (the *gulāla* used at Holi) are sprinkled on it, and the priest, in order to intimate that (as at Phil the Fluter's Ball) the guests may now contribute to the funds, proceeds to recite some such verse as: 'Any present given on any of five occasions—marriage, the fourteenth of January, an eclipse, the birth of a son, the extra day of a month—brings eternal merit'. This scarcely-voiled hint is promptly acted on, and all the friends and relatives hasten to put some money on the empty plate. Anything that the married daughters and sisters give is received and then returned; with regard to the other presents, no concealment of value is attempted: a friend of the family carefully notes down the name of every donor and the amount that he or she gives, so that exactly that amount, whether it be one or two rupees, may be given in return when there shall be a wedding in the donor's family. The collection is then handed over to the young couple.

Amongst certain Brähmans it is at this point that the gift of a cow is made. Any one who is willing presents the young folk with a cow by the easy and inexpensive process of putting anything from a rupee to four annas on to another plate. But, simple as the method is, so much merit is acquired that even a casual passer-by is often anxious to contribute.

The priests—there are very often five—who have been officiating, share in the general present-giving. The old rule was that a Brähman should give a cow, a ruling chief a village,

<sup>1</sup> The reference to the hair is made because amongst many Brähmans the hair is never parted till a girl's wedding day. At the commencement of the ceremonies some 'fortunate' woman usually makes an auspicious mark on the bride's forehead at the beginning of the parting.

and a merchant a horse to the priest who married his daughter; but it is usual nowadays for the alms to be given in cash.

At this point the father and mother, who now realize that their daughter is actually married and going to leave them, are permitted, nay rather encouraged, to weep. It would have been unlucky to have had any tears shed earlier in the proceedings.

The thread or cord which has encircled and united the necks of the newly married husband and wife is now taken off by some 'happy' woman and put round the neck of the bride alone, who will wear it for four or five days.

The bridegroom takes his little wife in his arms and holds her up so that she may take down one of the uppermost of the earthen water-pots fencing in the square.

She puts it down and scatters rice grains over the square, thus dismissing Agni and the other gods who had taken up their abode there.

Afterwards they go and bow to Gaṇeśa and give him a coco-nut and four annas, to thank him for having allowed everything to pass off successfully without playing any of his mischievous pranks. In many families they next go and bow to all their seniors and offer each of them a coco-nut and some coins. The bride and bridegroom are then given a piece of sugar, which let no man say they have not earned!

## CHAPTER V

### AFTER THE WEDDING

The Feasting—Washing away Divinity—King and Queen—The Great Feast—The Better Half—Farewells—The Provision Jar—Cart-wheel Worship—The End of the Booth—Wedding Journey—Peace Pot—The Welcoming of the Bride—Puberty—The First Cooking—Fire Worshippers (Agnihotri)—The Wife's Vigils—Wheat Worship—The Dumb Third—The Dark Third.

THE bride's father, even when the young couple are safely married, has not yet finished with his expenses, for among the Nāgara, at any rate, he has to provide nine more meals.<sup>1</sup>

At these feasts the young bridegroom is given the most prominent place, even his own father playing a subordinate part to his. At each meal he sits on a painted stool and should, if possible, eat off silver plate and drink from a silver cup; not only so, but his palate is consulted as to the dishes provided. As a rule, *laḍḍu* and other sweets are given, but, if the young husband so desires, mangoes and a sort of milk pudding are substituted.

When the gentlemen have withdrawn, the ladies come to dine. The dishes used by the men are removed, and water sprinkled to purify the ground, after which the ladies take their seats and begin, the bride being seated at the same place, and, if possible, on the same stool, that her husband had sat on. Every morning of the four or five days that the feasting lasts the bridegroom's sister goes to the bride's house and plaits her hair and gives her flowers, cardamom seeds, and spices.

<sup>1</sup> The Oxford undergraduate who took for the motto of his college career *Poor Pa Pays* has much in common with his Indian brother; with the latter, however, it is the father-in-law who has to 'fork out'.

It will be remembered that amongst the Nāgara the young bride and bridegroom were looked on as incarnations of Śiva and Pārvatī<sup>1</sup> (hence the religious merit derived from worshipping them), and for three nights, at the very least, they have observed celibacy and abstained from salted food. Nor is this all, but during the days when they are representatives of the deity they must not bathe, so after the bath of ceremony taken on the wedding day they can bathe no more for three days. In the same way, the white cloth which each put on when they began to play the part of the great ascetic and his wife must not be taken off night or day till these three days have elapsed, but, on the third day after the wedding, they take off the cloth and bathe, so washing away their divinity. Even then they do not become ordinary mortals, for they are looked on as a king and queen till the end of the festivities, and as such the groom wields a sword.<sup>2</sup> A Brāhman, however, only holds the sword (which other bridegrooms keep all the time) for an hour or so. The respective fathers-in-law provide each of the happy pair with a new dress to put on after the bath, the bridegroom's being of red silk with a gold border, and the bride's of any coloured silk, or the parents may compound by giving them each five or ten rupees in cash.<sup>3</sup>

The biggest feast of all (the Gaurava) takes place on the third day with the followers of Śiva (and on the fourth with the followers of Viṣṇu), when about eighty or a hundred dishes are provided.

At this big dinner the bride is usually given very handsome presents in gold or cash by her father-in-law and other relatives.

Though now married, the husband and wife will sleep in

<sup>1</sup> By the twice-born castes other than Brāhmins, and even by some of the low castes, the bridegroom is looked on as a king, not a divinity.

<sup>2</sup> No permission from the state is needed for the bridegroom to hold this sword, so agreed is every one that for the time being he is a king.

<sup>3</sup> When cash is given in lieu of the actual thing, the full equivalent in value is never paid.

different rooms for three nights, during which time they should not eat anything salt or acid. Of course, if the bride is very young, she will not go to live in the house of her mother-in-law for some time; but even if older, they should not begin their married life together, the Scriptures say, for a year, or, if this is not possible, for twelve nights, or for six, or, at least, for three.

As we saw, the wife is called the half of her husband's body. It is interesting to notice that the left side of a married man is supposed to be a form of his wife. A wife can sit on her husband's left knee, but never on his right. A daughter or daughter-in-law can never sit on his left.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of all the feasting on the fifth day the bride's father calls all the relatives of the bridegroom and gives every one a present, usually turbans to the men and sārīs to the ladies; whilst to the bridegroom he gives a complete and very handsome new suit: loin-cloth, gold-edged turban,<sup>2</sup> silk shirt, silk coat, shoes, and even watch, chain, and gold ring.

The groom was reckoned a king from the time he bathed and washed away his divinity; now he is dressed like one. Meanwhile the bride puts on her best dress and is sent with her husband in a procession to visit the temples and offer coco-nuts and small silver coins to the gods. With some Brāhmans (not Nāgara for instance) this going to the temples is followed by the departure of the wife on a visit to her husband's house.<sup>3</sup> If the visit is to be paid now, when the

<sup>1</sup> In the Mahābhārata, for instance, King Pratipa was performing penances in the forest by the side of the river Ganges, when that river herself came and sat on his right knee in the most forward manner and asked him to marry her. He told her that she could be his daughter or become his daughter-in-law, but as she had sat on his right knee (instead of his left), she could never be his wife; so without more ado she just married his son.

<sup>2</sup> If the bride's father is a poor man, he only gives a turban and not a whole suit.

<sup>3</sup> In any case she would not go to her husband's house now to stay for more than a month. She would then return for six months to her own home before the final departure.

bride is ready to leave, the ladies of the house sing on her behalf:

'I am now going to another family ;  
Now, if you can afford it, give me anything you can ;  
I ask that you shall always speak lovingly of me.  
I am like a sparrow living in a green forest :  
As it dries up, I fly away.'

Whilst this is being sung, her father and mother and brothers all weep.

Then follows a rite which must bear a close resemblance to the farewell a *sati* took of her home when going out to mount the funeral pyre. The happy bride (like the heart-broken widow) goes to the gate of the compound and stands there, holding a plate of a mixture of turmeric and alum, red in colour. Her relatives all come and, bowing down to her feet with joined hands, wish her happiness, and in return she throws rice grains on their heads and blesses them. This done, she dips her hands in the red mixture and imprints them on the wall. (As each part of the hand is indwelt by a different god, these red hands printed on the wall are equivalent to saying: 'May Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī dwell in your house and bless you'.) The bridegroom marks the wall with the print of his red hands exactly under hers, and among certain Brāhmans<sup>1</sup> red auspicious marks are made on the bride's dress as the young couple get into the cart, and the boy's scarf is tied to the girl's *sārī*.

A special jar of provisions is now prepared, and into it are put rice, coco-nut, tennis-ball-like sweets (*laddus*), and the wafer biscuits which were got ready before the wedding. On the top of the jar a small vessel is placed, and the whole thing is covered with green silk and put in the forefront of the cart that is to take the bride to her husband's house. Arrived there, the contents of the jar are distributed by the bride amongst her new relatives, though she is careful to keep some of this food for herself.

<sup>1</sup> This is not done by Nāgara.



The bride is probably quite young, about eight or nine, and so is only going now for a month's visit to her husband's house; but before she leaves home, the wheel of the cart must be worshipped. The bride's mother comes out of the house, wearing the crown of plantain leaves and the additional ritual *sārī*, and goes to the cart, while the priest stands beside her. Water is poured over the right wheel of the vehicle, and then clarified butter, and it is sprinkled with red turmeric and rice grains. The bride's mother then throws pulse over the wheel, to show that it may start. A coco-nut, meanwhile, is carefully chosen and inspected, to make sure it contains milk, and if it looks satisfactory, it is thrust under the wheel in such a way that the first revolution must crush it.

The wheel, always a sacred object in the East,<sup>1</sup> is amongst Brāhmans regarded as a symbol of Viṣṇu, and so, by worshipping it, the mother (poor anxious soul!) seeks protection from the Protector-god against danger from robbers, obstacles, and bad roads for her little daughter, who is about to pass out of her loving care.

If the coco-nut prove to be bad, it is indeed an evil omen, foretelling some sad catastrophe that will befall the girl. If, however, the coco-nut be as good as the mother's anxious care had hoped, the broken pieces are given to the little bride to keep in her *sārī*.

As we saw with regard to this visit, the customs of the Nāgara, for instance, differ from those of many other Brāhmans. For, whilst with Audīṭa and Sārasvata Brāhmans, the bride, after elaborate farewells, goes for a month's visit to her father-in-law's house, with the Nāgara this is not done; but after the procession to the temples, the young couple separate, the bride going to her own home and the bridegroom to his. If, however, the two houses are in the same town, the bride, before they separate, goes to her husband's house and bows to her mother-in-law, her father-in-law and any

<sup>1</sup> In the old days soldiers similarly worshipped the right wheel of their chariots before going into battle.

other elderly 'in-laws' who may be present, places a coco-nut before the household god, and then goes home alone. A Nāgara bridegroom, though he sleeps in his own house, might go and dine in his wife's house for a month, and she might similarly go to meals in his home for the same month.

With the Nāgara, the wedding booth is taken down at the end of the month, as a sign that everything is completed. The priest is called and says a few mantras over it, and then, throwing rice on it, gives Gaṇeśa leave to go. The bride's father invites all the bridegroom's relatives to a feast on that day, and with that the whole wedding ceremony ends.

With Brāhmans other than Nāgara, as the bride passes the wedding booth when starting for the visit to her husband's house, she takes into her hands a winnowing-fan filled with pulse and throws some of the grain from it on to the booth, thus giving the gods leave to go. The booth is soon after pulled down, with the exception of the so-called Ruby Pillar, which, in the case of both Nāgara and other Brāhmans, is left standing in the compound until the rain falls on it at the beginning of the monsoon; it is then taken into the house, to wait till the river shall be in flood. As soon as the water is considered high enough, it is taken out of the house and flung away into the stream.

But to return to the bride, who is about to visit her husband's house: her relatives escort her as far as the first river or tank; this, according to the Scriptures, they must not cross; so the mother fills a cup of water and gives it to her daughter to drink, to calm the girl's sorrow and emotions, and then she herself goes weeping home.

Perhaps here we might record another custom, which, though more usual amongst Baniās than Brāhmans, is so full of the shrewd objectivity characteristic of Hindus as to be worth our studying.

With the Baniās, at all events, it is usual to put in the cart, along with the bride, an earthen-ware pot filled with

arcca-nuts, rice, and dates, and covered with a yellow cloth. When the cart reaches the boundary of the township, this yellow wrapped jar is put down and left. With this jar all hurt feelings, touchiness, and grievances are also symbolically deposited. If the bridegroom's party has been hurt by any accidental slight, or coolness of welcome, or failure of hospitality; or if the bride's friends have been bored by the pretensions of the bridegroom's sister, the airs of his mother, or the stupidity of his own jokes, all remembrance of slights or boredom is left behind with the jar. Think of the comfort some such custom would be in England! It would be a real help if, every time that a bride felt irritated at the memory of how her 'in-laws' had tried to 'boss' her wedding, or dictate as to her honeymoon, she could say to herself: 'I threw all recollection of that away for ever in the old jam-pot, which I flung out of the carriage window on the way to the station'! One never passes one of these yellow jars on the outskirts of a village without appreciative laughter and inward applause for the people who so markedly left their squabbles behind them, determined to carry no pettiness over into their new life. Certainly the peace-pot should find a place in the wedding ceremonies of the Christian Church in India, as should also many other of the really beautiful symbolic customs we have studied.

To return to our bride once more. When the cart reaches the entrance to the bridegroom's village, the wedding party waits till evening, and then forms a procession and goes with beating of drums and loud music to the bridegroom's home. Before the young husband enters, he is offered the four balls, plough, &c., by his mother or sister, just as his mother-in-law offered them to him on his wedding day. The bride is sometimes lifted over the threshold by her mother-in-law, or led by her into the house by means of the wedding thread she is still wearing round her neck. The wife and husband then go and worship Gaṇeśa.

This done, they sit opposite to each other, and no less than

twenty-two things are thrown over them ; seven cowrie shells, seven dates, seven areca-nuts, and, most important of all, a gold ring. Four times these things are flung at them by the priest or the bridegroom's sister, and each time there is a great scramble as to who shall get the ring ; for the ancient jest never stales, and the one who seizes the ring most frequently will prove to be the real ruler of the house. Now the knot that tied the husband's scarf to his wife's *sārī* is undone, and also the fruit that was bound on their wrists to guard them from the assaults of passion, the bride loosening that on her husband's wrist, and vice versa. The *sārī* and scarf, however, are untied by the husband's sister or aunt, who probably charges about five rupees for the service.

Then the bride salutes the feet of her mother-in-law and expects a present in return. The bridegroom salutes his father and uncles in similar fashion, but he gets no present.

The bride's visit lasts for a month, during which she is treated as a guest, doing no hard work, not sweeping or cooking or fetching water, but eating specially dainty dishes and sleeping in her husband's room, after the *mindala* has been taken off. When the month is over, she returns to her own mother's house and stays there generally for six or eleven months ; if, however, owing to mourning or any other reason, she stays for more than eleven months, she will have to stay on twenty-five months, for she cannot leave in the second year.

Before the bride leaves her own home to go finally to her husband's and take up her abode there, an astrologer is always called in, to ensure that the departure shall take place on an auspicious day.

High-minded Brāhmans, whatever their sect, are nowadays most anxious that this final leave-taking and the girl's entering the state of wifehood should be postponed until she has attained physical puberty. Otherwise, as they say, the things that happen are too terrible to dwell on. There is nothing more pathetic than the sight of a little girl, treacherously

cheated out of her childhood, playing with her own immature baby, when she should still be playing with her dolls.

If, however, the young wife has married into an enlightened family, she will remain with her mother till the age of puberty is reached. Amongst certain Brāhmans, especially those who have come from the south, a festival is sometimes held at her father-in-law's house to celebrate her attainment of womanhood. The women-neighbours and friends come singing in procession and fill the corner of the girl's sārī with a coco-nut, green pulse, and areca-nuts, and then mark her forehead with turmeric.

Two gods and two goddesses should, according to the Scriptures, be worshipped at this crisis in the girl's development: Indra, Indrāṇī, Bhuvaneśvara, and Bhuvaneśvarī (Śiva and his consort); and nine other deities: Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, the moon, the sun, and the moon's ascending and descending nodes (Rāhu and Ketu). And if any of these seem inauspicious, they are propitiated by offerings.

As a matter of fact, all that generally happens nowadays is that for four days the girl is considered impure and may not cook, or grind, or worship, and if possible should not go outside the house. She sits on sacking or deer-skin, and may only sleep on a string bed, not on a mattress. She may use vessels of brass, but not of copper. After the fourth day she bathes in the house or courtyard, and puts on a green bodice and red sārī, her mother puts some molasses in her mouth, and she goes to visit her mother-in-law. That lady gives her a better bodice and sārī, of the same colour, but made of silk, and feasts her on molasses and sweetmeats. The daughter-in-law on her part worships the mother-in-law's feet and offers her two rupees. Once the bride has attained puberty, the completion of the trousseau is hurried on, and as soon as it is ready, the auspicious day is fixed for her to go to her husband's home.

As is well known, the young people do not go to their own home, but have to live with the bridegroom's parents. Two

or three men and women come to the bride's house ~~to fetch~~<sup>to fetch</sup> her; they are feasted there for a day or two, and then ~~she~~<sup>she</sup> returns with them.

We saw that, with some Brāhmans, such as the Nāgara, the bride does not pay the month's visit immediately after the wedding, as is the usual custom with many other Brāhmans; but the visit is only deferred, and when a Nāgara bride is about fourteen or fifteen, she pays it, but always some months after attaining puberty. Her father gives her ornaments and clothes, and her parents-in-law receive her as an honoured guest. She can order any food she likes, and all her wishes are consulted in every way; her room is well furnished, and (oh, crowning joy!) she wears her best clothes all the time. Her school days generally end with this visit, but she may play any indoor game she likes, and as she is bothered with no housework, she can spend as long as she likes sewing or reading or gossiping. In the evening her mother-in-law takes her out calling on her different friends, and she displays her most elaborate toilettes.

Among the Nāgara, she still goes back home after this visit, but for a shorter period, generally only five or six months, and then goes, not as a visitor, but as a wife, to take up her abode permanently in her father-in-law's house.

After the final going to her husband's house, to show that she is indeed a wife and not a visitor, the bride helps with the cooking. The first meal she prepares is made the occasion of a high festival. All the friends and relatives of the family are invited, and the young wife triumphantly serves on silver plate what she has cooked. It is an expensive meal (as a young wife's first attempt at cooking usually is!) for each of the guests has to bring her either money or jewellery when they come, and after they have dined, they all put money on the silver dish, the father-in-law, if wealthy, pleased and generous, leading the way with one hundred and fifty rupees or a gold ornament, but if miserly or dyspeptic, he has been known to give as little as five rupees.

As a rule the elderly relatives will keep the cooking in their hands, and only allow the girl to help, but if they were ill, she would have to undertake it alone. If she have married into a poor family, she would probably have to get up at four to grind, and would go out morning and evening to the village well to fetch water; but a Nāgara lady, however poor, is never permitted to fetch water, to grind, or to sweep the house; so they often have to spend money on keeping a servant that they would far sooner expend otherwise.

Sometimes she goes home again for a short visit, and then comes back to her husband's house, which henceforth seems her own. It is interesting to compare these visits to her old home with the English saying: 'No bride ever feels really settled in her husband's house till she has been home and seen that her old niche there is filled'.

But, whereas the English mother often whispers to her daughter: 'Remember that the first year of married life is not the happiest', thinking of the two strong wills that have to adjust themselves; the Indian mother's whisper is: 'Do not be as sweet as sugar, or they will overwhelm you with work, nor as sour as a nīm leaf, or they will spit you out'; for she is thinking more of the child-wife's position in a household of strange and often nagging women.

'If it was the mother-in-law who broke it', runs a proverb that throws much light on a young wife's fate, 'the pot was earthen; if the daughter-in-law, it was golden.' '(O) mother-in-law', is the pathetic appeal of another proverb, 'be merciful: have you not also a daughter?'

The whole subject of wedding customs is engaging the attention of the reformers amongst the Brāhmins. The men, almost without exception, are anxious that the enormous expenses should be curtailed and the capital more profitably invested, but the women do not wish to be docked of any of their amusement. High-minded gentlemen, too, are very anxious that the vile and obscene expressions in many of the wedding songs should be expurgated, but India still awaits its

After his wedding it is open to every Brāhman to choose whether he will be an ordinary householder, content at most with the full sixteen rites, or become an Agnihotrī and observe forty-eight rites. If he choose the latter course, it will cost him some fifty thousand rupees, and he will probably ask the ruler of the state to grant him an annuity to defray his expenses in return for the merit he brings to the country. (Whether he gets it is another matter !)

There was recently a Nāgara in Rājkot who was an Agnihotrī, and though he himself was a very rich man, two important ruling chiefs gave him annuities, and he was treated with the highest honour, as though he had been a great noble.

An Agnihotrī brings the fire from his father-in-law's house when he marries, and this is never allowed to go out as long as the wife lives. (This particular gentleman married again after his first wife's death, and brought the fire afresh from his new father-in-law's house.)

The fire is kept in a special room, which is closed all day, and only opened morning and evening for special worship (Homa). The room is so sacred that no one but the worshipper and his wife ever enter it, and relying on this sanctity, it is sometimes used as a secure hiding-place for treasure, for the average Hindu still distrusts banks. Twenty years ago an Agnihotrī died in Rājkot, and the sacred fire was allowed to go out; when the sons came to dig up the altar, they found that a great deal of money had been buried beneath it.

Another rule the Agnihotrī must observe is never to leave the town in which he lives, and above all never to cross the sea, or he will assuredly die. (Strangely enough, this was literally fulfilled in the first case we quoted, for that Agnihotrī, being summoned by the ruling chief who was his patron, crossed the sea to go to him and died there.)

As a matter of fact, owing to the expense, very few Brāhmans elect to become Agnihotrī, but ordinary Brāhmans do reverence to the fire, and offer five oblations to it, at least



before their first meal in the morning, if not before their evening one. In this book we shall choose for our study an ordinary Brāhman and not an Agnihotrī.

In Kāthiāwār, at all events, the Vedic rites (of *Garbhādhāna* and *Pūṃsavāna*), to procure offspring and to ensure that it be male offspring, are not usually observed, but the newly married wife will have to keep certain fasts to gain either long life for her husband, or a son. (The horror of being left a widow gives colour and direction to all a Hindu woman's prayers, rites, and thoughts; and only second to that is her fear of barrenness.) All these fasts fall in the monsoon, that specially sacred and specially unhealthy period of the year.

The first fast (*Tāpī Sātama*) occurs during the first month of the rains, usually on the seventh day of Āṣāḍha. The previous day the wife is careful to make a specially big meal, for on the day itself she must neither eat nor drink, but spend the whole time praying for a long life for her husband. In the evening she and several other newly married wives go to the house of some gentleman of position and sing special songs (*Rāsaḍā*). All night they must keep awake, and, as they may not eat, they spend the whole night singing or dancing; next morning their host provides a repast of fruit and milk (which seems a particularly good-natured thing of him to do, as they must have kept him awake all night!) and at about eleven they go to their own homes and have a substantial feast. The good-natured host will have his sleep disturbed in this way once every year for some time, as the young wives observe this fast once a year for seven years from their wedding.

We have already discussed Molākāta, the great occasion in a girl's year. Married girls may not observe it, but they do not want to keep away from it, so they go to show off their new dignity and to guide, with great importance one may be sure, the little girls.

Wheat grains are worshipped on *Divāso*, the last day of the

month Āṣāḍha. Nine days before the fast earth is brought from an ant-hill, mixed with powdered cow-dung, put into a shallow earthenware pot, and then sown with grains of wheat. When the actual day arrives, young wives get up early and go and bathe in a river (or, if Nāgara, bathe at home), and on returning home they light an earthenware lamp of clarified butter, which, whatever happens, must not be allowed to go out for the thirty-six hours during which the fast lasts. All that time the young wife keeps awake and may only take one slight repast of fruit, sweets, and uncooked food, which must be provided by the husband's kin, even if the girl is still living in her mother's house.

In the evening she worships the wheat. The pot in which it is growing is tied round with red cotton and put on a low stool marked with the svastika, and then the bride offers it the fivefold worship, as though to a god, marking it with the auspicious mark, offering flowers, incense, light, and fruit. After the fruit has been offered, the young wife herself eats it; then, wearing their best clothes, she and other young wives go to the same good-tempered man's house that they visited before, and sing and dance all night. Of course their host gains both merit and good luck from their presence, which may partly reconcile him to these sleepless nights. The next morning the girls return home, but they do not seem to do anything very special that day (possibly because they are both tired and hungry) until the evening, after the cows have come home from grazing, when they break their fast and allow the lamp to go out at will. The object of this fast is, they say, to gain children, and long life for their husbands.

Every year for five years it is repeated, but there is a slight variation at the end of the fifth year, for then on the last day they invite five 'fortunate' women (none of whom, by the way, should be expectant mothers) and feast them. After the women have finished their treat, they are each given half a coco-nut and half a coco-nut kernel, some cardamon seeds, some cloves, an areca-nut, and a silver or copper coin.

The young wife, whose whole forehead is besmeared with red turmeric and rice, next washes the left big toe (not, as one might expect, the right) of each of the five women, first with water and then with milk, and afterwards makes the auspicious mark on the toe. Sometimes, if the young wife has no children, she observes this fast every year, even after the four years are past, until at last her desire is granted.

Many Brāhman ladies once a year, on the third day of the moonless half of the month Śrāvaṇa, called 'The Dumb Third' (*Muṅgī Trīja*), observe a day of absolute silence and fasting. They may grind and sweep and fetch water, but must not speak one word the whole day through. So terrible an austerity is naturally expected to bring a great reward, and the object of this silent fast is to gain a son, or long life for that son when one is born. If a son is born and dies, this fast cannot be observed till another son is born.

In the evening, still maintaining absolute silence, the wife goes and selects a little twig of pīpal, on which (strange resemblance to St. Patrick!) three leaves are growing, side by side. These three leaves represent the three goddesses: Gaurī, Sāvitrī, and Lakṣmī. On the central leaf the woman paints a svastika, or the word Śrī, and on the other two she makes the auspicious red mark. Then she herself dons a necklace of sixteen threads (which she considers to be equivalent to thirty-two, as there are sixteen strands on both sides of her neck), and ties sixteen knots in it. Next she lights a lamp of clarified butter, not in the shell but in the kernel of a coco-nut, and in order that the nut may not catch fire, she sprinkles it with wheat flour. This she arranges on a small heap of white millet, and, in front of the lighted coco-nut, before she breaks her own fast, she makes seven heaps of the food she is going to eat: half-crushed wheat, molasses, or sugar. The leaves have still to be worshipped, which the lady does by sprinkling them with turmeric and water, and then, and not till then, may she eat and speak. Afterwards she takes off the sixteen-thread necklace she has worn and

puts it away safely, knowing that she will want it again; for next year, when she makes her new necklace, she takes out this old one and puts it round the trunk of a pīpal tree. Finally, when she has finished her meal, she picks up the coco-nut lamp and the three divine leaves and takes them to the nearest temple of Śiva.

A wife begins to observe this fast when she is quite young, and year after year she observes one painful day of silence, until not only she herself, but also her son's wife bear a son; then the relieved grandmother takes off the thread necklace for the last time and presents it to her daughter-in-law, with the happy knowledge that from now on the only restraint her tongue need know the whole year round will be that imposed by absolute fatigue! Henceforth she may chatter at will, till she can talk no longer!

The Nāgara ladies do not have to submit to this discipline of silence; instead, they observe a fast called 'The Dark Third' (*Kājaṭi Trīja*). In the evening they go again to that same long-suffering gentleman's house and sing, and, on returning home, they eat fruits and sweets and keep awake till one in the morning. Their object, like that of the other Brāhman ladies, is to gain a son, and long life for their husbands, but they only have to observe this fast for three days.

We shall study the other women's fasts when we come to the Brāhman sacred year; here we have only noticed those that threw special light on the early married life of the imaginary couple whose life story we are studying. One of the aims of the fasts is to obtain offspring, and, supposing that desire to be fulfilled, we can now turn to notice how an expectant mother is guarded.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DESIRE FOR A SON

PRENATAL CARE—Fifth Month Ceremony—Rules to be observed by an Expectant Mother—Offering to the Invincible Goddess—Hair-parting (Sīmanta)—The Horse Dance—DISAPPOINTMENTS—Remedies : Story of Kṛiṣṇa—Planet Placating—Marrying a Calf to a Bull—The Worship of the Five—The Worship of the Three—Thirteen Black Pots—Seven Days' Reading of the Seventh Book—CO-MARRIAGE—ADOPTION—The Smelling of the Head.

IF there are plenty of men folk in the household to which the young wife is going, and if her husband has both elder and younger brothers living, and all the sisters-in-law are the happy mothers of many children, the risks for the new wife are not so great.

But if there are no brothers-in-law and no children in the house, she is very much afraid of what a barren widowed sister-in law may do to injure her unborn child.

Afraid or not, however, as soon as she is sure of her happy prospects, her own mother (if it so happens that she is still in her old home) sends word to the mother-in-law, and the girl goes to her husband's home, carrying a coco-nut and areca-nuts in the corner of her sārī.

On the way there, and after her arrival, she is on her guard against bewitched grain. For a jealous sister-in-law sometimes takes some grain to a religious mendicant, who mixes it with turmeric and says mantras over it; then, when the young wife's attention is distracted, the sister-in-law will contrive to stand opposite her and throw the fatal corn over her and so ruin all her hopes.

For fear of attracting the evil eye, the bride now gives up oiling her hair and wearing gay-coloured sārīs. She is sur-

rounded by kindness and thoughtfulness, but also by restrictions. She may not climb a hill, or go in a cart, or laugh or cry immoderately. She is fed on milk, rice, and wheat, and should avoid all highly spiced things. She is not allowed to see a dead body, or anything that might suggest death to her, such as a Muḥammadan *tābut*, or rope-dancers. She may not see anything unpleasant, such as a miser or a leper; and another restriction forbids her going to a house where a baby has been born. All the young wife's wishes must be fulfilled, or the child will suffer: for instance, if she covets an ear-ring, and it is not given to her, the chances are that the child will be born without a lobe to its ear.

In the fifth month an expectant mother goes through a special rite of preservation (*Rakṣābandhana*, the Binding of the Protective Thread) to ward off the evil eye, illness, or jealous spells. As a rule this ceremony is only performed before the birth of a first child, but, if any harm befall it, this and the seven-month ceremony are sometimes repeated before the birth of a second child. The astrologer is summoned to choose some auspicious day, generally a Sunday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, and all the near women-relatives of both bride and bridegroom are invited to the ceremony.

The expectant mother, wearing a red or green *sārī* with a gold border, which has been specially brought for the occasion, and which must not have one black spot on it, sits on a low stool in the centre of a red-besmeared square of ground. No men are allowed to be present, but all the ladies sit round her and sing songs, whilst the husband's sister smears turmeric and rice all over the young wife's forehead.

If she be a Nāgara, the guard (*raṅṅā*) is tied on to her wrist by the same sister-in-law without more ado (it will probably be a silver or gold bangle with little bells). But, in the case of Sārasvata or Audīṭa Brāhmins, the expectant mother first goes to the nearest well or river and fills a small pot with water. On her return, a 'lucky' woman stands on the threshold of her house and takes it from her hand; this is

repeated five times, and after that the wife never fetches water again till the child is born.

The guard, too, with these Brāhmins, is quite different. It consists of dust taken from the junction of four roads and mixed with the black oily substance that has accumulated on Hanumān's image. (The monkey god, as any one might guess from his being constantly depicted with his foot on the demon of pain, is the great overcomer of evil spirits.) The dust, together with a cowrie shell and an iron ring, are tied up in a piece of dark blue indigo cloth.

The husband's sister, if she be a virgin, or if she be married and her children and husband are all living, ties this little bundle to the right wrist of the expectant mother, and so guards her absolutely from all fear of the evil eye. Once this ceremony has been performed, the rules that she has to observe are far more stringent; before, it was wise to observe them, now it is imperative; for, as Hindu men say, there are two great Scriptures, Jośī and Dośī—the astrologers and the old wives—and both should be obeyed.

After the fifth month, a young wife should never sit on a threshold, or in the depression in the floor which is used as a mortar, neither must she ever wield a pestle. She must not sit in the winnowing fan, or use the fan to winnow corn.

She should not bathe in a flowing stream, climb on an ant-hill, dig in the ground with her nails, or write on the ground<sup>1</sup> with stick or pencil.

Nor must the expectant mother sleep any longer than her usual custom by day or night, or take any exercise at all, or visit unholy places, like burning-grounds; or quarrel, or stretch when yawning. She should not loosen or oil her hair, and,

<sup>1</sup> This last action is forbidden as being one of the signs of a fool. The unmistakable 'notes' of a fool are: To eat whilst walking; to laugh whilst talking; to brood or grieve over what is past; to boast of kindnesses one has shown to others; to walk up unsummoned to two persons talking privately together; to tear grass into small pieces; to smack one's knees; to write on the ground.

after the seventh month, she will refrain from washing it, for fear of enraging that dread snake, Śeṣanāga.

She must not sleep facing the south, or with her face downwards ; she must not speak inauspicious words, or eat at twilight, or sit under a tree in the half dark. Every day she should worship Pārvatī and give something in charity. We have seen that she ought not to cross a river, but now from the fifth month she must not go and see one, till the child is a month and a half old.

The husband, too, has to comply with certain restrictions : he must not shave completely till the child is born ; he must not cross the ocean, or go to a foreign country ; he has to give the wife whatever she asks ; and he may not take part in a funeral or a procession.

As the days go on, there is another rite which, though the Nāgara, for instance, do not observe it, is believed by some other Brāhmins to be very efficacious.

On some auspicious day about the seventh month, the expectant mother, together with her mother-in-law and several other elderly ladies, goes outside the town to worship a Śamī tree,<sup>1</sup> for Aparājītā (the Invincible), the *śakti* of the god Agni, lives in that tree.

The young wife wears silk clothes, and her forehead is besmeared with red powder and rice. She worships the tree by marking it with the auspicious red mark, and then arranges seven heaps of powdered white millet, and seven of oil seeds mixed with crushed molasses, and places a lighted lamp of clarified butter in front of it.

When all this has been arranged, she circumambulates the tree four times, pouring water round it as she walks, and finally bows to the tree and offers it a coco-nut, which she breaks in front of it. When she goes away, the little lamp is left behind and allowed to burn itself out, as it would be unlucky to extinguish it.

<sup>1</sup> Mimosa Suma.



The writer has been assured that, besides guarding the unborn child, this rite also keeps it warm.

One of the old Vedic rites—*Sīmanta* or Hair-parting—which sanctifies the mother and protects the child, is still performed, though others, as we have seen, have fallen into disuse.

An astrologer is called in to choose an auspicious day, but his choice is limited, for the ceremony may only take place on a Sunday, Tuesday, or Thursday, and never on the fourth, fourteenth, or last day of the month. It should be in the seventh or eighth month, a day in the eighth month being most usually chosen.

On the previous day, the parents of the expectant mother are invited, and five or ten 'fortunate' women who have never lost a child are also summoned to the house to sing songs, but they are not allowed to clap their hands. The foreheads of these women are besmeared with turmeric, and the young wife's parents give them oil for their hair, a thread to tie it, a mica *īāṇḍalo* (auspicious mark) for their foreheads, and five or ten areca-nuts each.

The next morning the wife of the Sun (*Rannā Devī*, or, as she is popularly called, *Rāṇḍala Mātā*, or *Randalā Mātā*) is invoked. She is represented by two brass vessels, on each of which a coco-nut is placed, whilst a thread is tied round the neck of the vessel. Some say that as a rule only one coco-nut and one vessel represent *Rāṇḍala Mātā*, but as uneven numbers stand for daughters and even for sons, everything now is done in twos, fours, or sixes, not in odd numbers.<sup>1</sup>

In villages the representation is made more complete by the priest drawing two faces on paper and putting them on the coco-nuts and placing ornaments round the necks of the vessels.

On this day seven 'lucky' women are summoned for each *Rannā Devī*, so fourteen in all are invited. They must be free from any bodily defect, and either virgins, or else mothers who

<sup>1</sup> Others say that *Rāṇḍala Mātā* must always be represented by two or four vessels.

have husband and child living, but they themselves must not be expectant mothers.

It is interesting to notice that they are invited in a special way, being summoned by the expectant mother herself, who goes to their houses and marks their foreheads with turmeric, if she finds them in; if not, she makes the same mark on the lintel of the door. Such an invitation is tantamount to a royal command, for the invited guest may not refuse.

The fourteen women, whether married or not, are looked on as an incarnation of the great mother-power, Jagadambā, so the expectant mother worships them. First she washes the big toe of each of their right feet with water, and then with milk; next she makes the auspicious red mark on it. This done, she touches their toes and then her own eyes (so conveying their holiness to her eyes), or else she puts to her lips one drop of the mixture in which she has washed their toes.<sup>1</sup>

After making the auspicious mark on her own forehead, she seats the women on low stools, and food is brought and offered, first to the two goddesses, and then to them. The food is specially dainty, but, whatever else is or is not provided, a sort of rice pudding and bread are always prepared. Each of the fourteen women offers their hostess a spoonful of this special pudding and some bread, which she eats, regarding it as consecrated food (*prasāda*).

The astrologer has not only fixed the day for this ceremony, he has also declared the exact moment when the young wife must bathe, and in whose house she must take that bath. So now she goes to whatever house he dictates (it is a comfort that the house indicated by the horoscope is generally that of a near relative or friend!) and bathes at the exact moment the stars have commanded. She also washes her hair with milk, molasses, and turmeric, then with arīṭhā-nut, and after the

<sup>1</sup> This is the usual method of showing special honour to religious teachers, family priest, kings, or to parents after a long absence from home. As all rivers meet in the sea, so the sanctity of all places of pilgrimage dwells in the right toe of a Brāhman, whether man or woman.

bath she puts on the special new clothes given by her own mother, consisting generally of a red sārī, green camisole, and green petticoat, often trimmed with lace. (The mother sometimes sends a turban for the husband at the same time.)

A whole company of women, who have attended her to the bath, now escort her back to her mother-in-law's house in a great procession. The expectant mother wears on her head a crown made of dried plantain leaves (or, in the case of some Brāhmans, of grass). Over it she wears a piece of red or white cloth about five yards long, while another piece of cloth of the same colour, but much longer and cheaper, is spread for her to walk on, so that she may never tread on the ground. (As a matter of convenience, they try and arrange that the two houses shall only be about twenty steps apart.)

Over her head children hold a canopy of green cloth tied to bamboos, which keeps off the evil eye, and prevents anything like evil charmed grains dropping on her head.

The young wife walks very slowly, and at each step she takes, a little brother or sister-in-law puts down an areca-nut or a coco-nut, and a coin varying from a pice to a rupee, which a sister-in-law picks up and keeps when the young mother has passed by. (It is the expense of this, which falls on the wife's parents, that sometimes nowadays prevents the ceremony being performed at all. With certain other Brāhmans the ceremony is obligatory, but the expenses are curtailed.) Great care is taken at this time to guard the young mother from the evil eye and from black magic. Her own mother walks close beside her holding a sour lime; in the corner of the young wife's sārī a coco-nut is placed, and on her finger she wears an iron ring. But the special danger that besets her is that a barren woman may stealthily cut off a piece of her dress, and so cause a miscarriage, and to prevent this, her closest friends make a ring round her as she walks and allow no one to break through their ranks and touch her.

When the little wife reaches her mother-in-law's house, she is welcomed by a 'lucky' woman, who waves a brass vessel of

water with a coco-nut on top of it round her head, whilst a priest—the only man allowed to be present—recites mantras.

The water is then thrown on the ground, and a little of the mud it makes is smeared on the expectant mother's head, near her ear, to save her from the evil eye. After this she goes into the house and sits where the two goddesses have been installed.

The lamp in front of them will have been lit on the previous night, and the greatest care has been taken ever since that it shall not go out. The prayer recited when it is lit runs:

'O lamp, you are a form of the Śakti Devī, you are a witness to the due performance of this ceremony, you are a remover of obstacles, so burn steadily till this ceremony is completed.'

The lamp should not face south, and the earthen vessel which holds it should not rest on the ground, but on a stool or a stand. (A lamp is only once put on the floor, namely at the time of a death.)

It is in the presence of the goddesses, and with this lamp as witness, that the expectant mother now sits for the actual hair-parting which has given its name to this ceremony.

Her sister or her sister-in-law selects a porcupine quill having three white stripes on it and therewith combs the young wife's hair, and then parts it with a spindle, on which threads of cotton have been carefully left. The hair is then oiled, which, as we have seen, has not been done for a long time.

All this time the fourteen 'lucky' women have been sitting near at hand, and now the young mother's parents arrive bringing presents (ornaments, clothes, &c.). They come singing in a procession, having timed their arrival for this exact moment.

We have already seen the importance attributed to the corner of a woman's shawl (the *kholo* of her *sāri*). It seems to represent her powers symbolically and is considered specially sacred, doubtless from the shape it assumes when

filled. If a woman makes a request, lifting that corner of her shawl to her face, it is a dangerous thing to refuse it, and it is by so lifting it that she worships either god or man.

When a Brāhman is blessing a man, he throws grains of rice on to his turban, wishing him long life, success, and strength; but it is into the corner of a woman's sārī that he throws the blessing for her, wishing her eight sons and no widowhood. It is no unimportant point to receive the blessing of a Brāhman correctly, seeing that he has magical powers at the end of each of his five fingers!

The expectant mother makes a big depression in this all-important corner of her shawl and stands opposite one of the 'lucky' women who has never lost a child. Into her sārī is put one and a quarter measures of rice (the unit of the measure may vary, but it must always be one and a quarter of some unit) and seven areca-nuts, all of which are given by the wife's own mother. This is all transferred five times over from the corner of the young wife's shawl to that of the 'lucky' woman, the most meticulous care being exercised that not one grain of rice fall to the ground, for that would foretell certain disaster to the child.

Very often at this point a sister-in-law binds a gold 'guard' set in a silver bangle, or even one studded with diamonds, to the young wife's wrist.

The wife then sits on a low wooden stool, and her husband's younger brother comes forward, having smeared his hand with red turmeric, and slaps her once on the right cheek. The Hindus say that, as a stumble prevents a fall, and the prick of a needle wards off a hanging, so this slight inconvenience will prevent a greater one; but there is a shrewd saying that the brother-in-law who slaps too hardly is a fool, for his sister-in-law, being the wife of his elder brother, will not lack opportunity to get her own back. For the present, however, her parents give him a rupee or four annas for his pains!

Either before or after the slapping, a little baby boy of perhaps six months, but at any rate under a year old, is put

into the lap of the expectant mother, and she talks to it and caresses it and plays with it, hoping all the time (poor little soul !) with desperate earnestness that her baby, too, may prove to be a boy.

A feast is given that night, and, whoever else sleeps, the young wife and her mother watch, to see that the lamp lit in front of the goddesses does not go out.

A most exciting interlude now takes place; especially amongst village Brāhmans. When the lamp was lit, a tiny heap of grain was put beside the goddesses, and to-night this will be examined to see what omens it bears. A woman comes in, a medium (Guj. *bhūī*) or devotee, through whom the goddess who was installed in the brass vessels is supposed to speak.

That goddess, Rannā Devī, the wife of the Sun, once grew weary of her husband's burning caresses and left him to seek peace and quiet. Enraged at her desertion, he turned her into a mare, and then, as his anger cooled, he repented and, himself taking the form of a horse, he went to seek her in the forest. Overjoyed at finding her, he danced round her, and it is this dance which is now imitated.

The woman devotee dances like a horse, and proves that she is a true *bhūī* and no fraud by passing a pretty severe test. She puts an earthen vessel on the top of a brass one, and in the upper one she arranges four lighted wicks; the whole erection is then placed on her head, and she has to dance so skilfully on one leg that nothing falls down, and the lights are not extinguished. No wonder the *bhūīs* claim that this horse-dance can never be performed save by the genuinely<sup>1</sup> inspired. Before she attempts the horse-dance, the power (*śakti*) of the goddess enters the devotee on this wise. She lights a stick of incense from the lamp of *ghī* (clarified butter) and inhales the incense. As she inhales it, she begins to shudder and to shake, and this quivering is accepted as a sign that the goddess has entered her. (In the same way, when non-Brāhmans are

<sup>1</sup> If any one were to sham inspiration and attempt the horse-dance, the belief is that he would be attacked by leprosy.

about to offer a goat at Daserā, the shaking and quivering of the goat is a clear sign that it is acceptable.)

The devotee, being now inhabited by the goddess, examines the grain to divine from it if all is well. Three times she takes up a few grains and, spreading them before the goddess, counts them; if three times following they are an even number, or if three times they come to an uneven number, all will go well; what is dreaded is that once or twice they should be even and once uneven. It is a breathless minute whilst they are counted, and then, if the goddess is pleased, the bhuī holds up one finger in silence, if displeased she holds up two and rubs them together.

Of course the anxious relatives cannot sit down under the goddess's displeasure. Something has to be done, and sometimes the devotee, sometimes a Brāhman, decides what steps must be taken. It may be that a yard of black or green cloth has to be put on a metal plate, waved round the head of the expectant mother, and then given to a Brāhman. Sometimes, even if the goddess is pleased, it may prove advisable to feed five Brāhmans!

The next morning the ceremony ends. The goddesses are dismissed in the usual way by throwing rice grains on them, and the priest takes the coco-nuts. The bhuī is fed, and the 'lap' of her sārī is filled with green or black pulse. Sweet food is offered to the family gods, and either the mother or the mother-in-law plaits the hair of the girl.

After this ceremony has been performed, the expectant mother is free to go to her own mother's house on any auspicious day. The astrologer will be careful, however, to choose one when Venus will either be on her right or left as she walks home, for she may not go when it faces her directly.

As we saw in the first chapter, if all goes happily she remains in her mother's house till after the birth of her child; but, seeing that the poor young wife's attention has been so continuously directed to the chances of all not going happily,

but of herself or her unborn child being injured through evil spirits, the malice of the living, or the jealousy of the dead, it is not to be wondered at if a terrified immature mother is only too often disappointed.

Purely from the eugenic point of view it will be of the deepest interest to note the difference that will take place in the physical and mental stamina of the Indian race, when an expectant mother's mind is filled with the thought of the Love of God encompassing and shielding her, instead of being taught that sinister influences continually surround her, ready to pounce on her out of the dark. Even as it is, an Indian mother can understand perhaps better than we do the underlying protection of the thought: 'He shall gather the lambs in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young'.

In the first chapter we have studied a normal case; now we must see what remedies are adopted, after one disappointment has occurred, in order to prevent another.

If the miscarriage happens early, the young mother is only reckoned impure for four days; if after five months, it is treated as a confinement, excepting that the mother is not given such nice food and is not allowed to touch clarified butter or wheat (which are classified as 'cold' things), but treacle and oil and green millet, which are considered 'warm', are given to her. The mother is considered ceremonially impure for about fifteen days, but if the child has never lived at all, *sūtaka* (or ceremonial defilement) would not attach to any other members of the household.

The disappointed young father and mother would feel sure that it is owing to their evil karma that the child has not been born, so they would perhaps study the book called *Karma Vipāka*, which prescribes appropriate remedies, or more probably still they would consult an astrologer and act as he advised. He will probably tell them to try one out of seven possible remedies.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are, of course, many more than seven possible remedies, but these are the most usual.



1. Sometimes he tells them to pay a Brāhman to read the *Harivaṁśa* aloud to them, in the hope that hearing the stories of Kṛṣṇa which it contains may free them from the sin which has destroyed their unborn child.

2. If the astrologer found that the father was adversely affected by a planet, such as Maṅgala, he would order him to repeat a particular mantra (the Gopāla Santāna Pāṭha, which contains a prayer to Kṛṣṇa for children) one hundred thousand times.

3. But, if the astrologer suspects that the trouble is owing to the anger of ancestors dissatisfied with the śrāddha offered to them, or to the jealousy of some brother who has met an untimely death by serpent bite or other accident before he had any children, or who, though he may have lived to a good age, never succeeded in having any children; then he will ordain that a young bull be married to a heifer (*Nilotsarga*). On the appointed day the two animals are taken round the fire four times, the would-be father holds their tails in his hand, whilst the presiding priest (the *ācārya*) pours water on the tails one hundred and eight times, repeating each time, as he does it, a different verse from the *Matsya Purāṇa*. As no one is sure exactly which ancestor has been offended, the name of every one of them is mentioned separately, and the priest, on behalf of the young couple, beseeches them to be reconciled 'through the tail of the cow'.

Then an elaborate offering to the dead is made. One large ball of rice (called the *Dharma Pinḍa*) is placed on darbha-grass near the spot where the right forefoot of the male calf is resting, and around that the young husband arranges one hundred and seven balls, saying: 'I put these here, in order that my ancestors may ascend to heaven'.

So efficacious is this offering considered to be, that the whole one hundred and eight balls are called 'the Fort of Gayā', after the holy city in Bengal where the most effective of all śrāddha can be offered to male ancestors (just as the best of all śrāddha to female ancestors can be offered at

Siddhpur).<sup>1</sup> Once a man has performed a śrāddha at the city of Gayā, he need never offer another, and so it is hoped that this sort of Gayā will also settle the ancestral dissatisfaction once and for all.

The male calf is then marked, with red turmeric, on the right thigh with the trident (*triśūla*) of Śiva, and on the left with the wheel of Viṣṇu, and is turned loose. The belief is that the ancestors who have been so troublesome will remain quiet and good in the heavens for as many years as there are particles of dust adhering to the bull's horn whenever it digs in the earth. The heifer is named 'The-one-married-in-the-presence-of-the-Sun', and it can never be sold, but is given to the Brāhman performing the service. Not only can he never sell it, but he may never sell its milk, which must be drunk as it is by him and his family, for butter may never be made from this cow's milk, unless it is going to be used in sacrifice.

4. Another way of propitiating the dead is to worship the spirit of a dead ancestor (*Tatpuruṣa*) together with the gods, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, and Yama.

This rite, known as Nārāyaṇa Bali, is generally performed in the Hindu months corresponding with our October to November, April to May, or August to September.

Five copper water-pots are taken to represent the gods, and in each one is placed a different image, representing one of the five gods: the image of Brahmā must be of silver, Viṣṇu's of gold, Rudra's of copper, Yama's of iron, and the dead ancestor's of lead. These are worshipped in the fivefold way; and in honour of each of the five, separate collections of five mantras are repeated.

Then the gods are given leave to go, and it is worth while noticing exactly how this is done; for while hitherto we have studied chiefly auspicious rites, we are now on the threshold of those dealing with dark powers.

As leave is given, each god is touched with the point of the

<sup>1</sup> It was at Siddhpur that Kapila preached to his mother with such effect that she became the river Sarasvatī.

darbha-grass, but the spirit of the dead ancestor is dismissed by touching his representation with the root of the grass. But, most marked of all, no rice is scattered over the gods, as is done on auspicious occasions, and though they are thus ceremoniously dismissed, they are not asked to come again.

Mortals are treated on the same plan, for when a man pays an ordinary call, his host gives him permission to depart, by saying: 'Do come again'; if, however, he is paying a visit of condolence, he receives his *congé* in the bare word 'Go'.

5. Another remedy (*Tripinḍī*) is often resorted to, specially by women, not only when no child is born in the family, but also if there is constant sickness and ill luck in the household. Frequent worry, or this special disappointment, convinces them that some dead ancestor is angry, and must be pacified by the worship of the three gods: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. To represent these three, three Brāhmins are called to the house and fed, and given clothing costing about fifty rupees for themselves and their wives.

Sometimes, instead of inviting three Brāhmins to the house, clothing is just sent in a bamboo basket to one Brāhmin. If the women feel sure it is a female ancestor that is hindering the birth of a child, or tormenting them all by her malice, then the basket is filled with female attire and all things dear to the heart of a woman: bangles, mirrors, combs, &c. In the same way, if they suspect a male ancestor, they send a scarf, turban, loin-cloth, and anything that he specially liked in his lifetime.

6. If, however, the annoyance be very severe, or the disappointment very great, the last ceremony (*Tripinḍī*) will be performed in a more elaborate and impressive form.

Thirteen Brāhmins are invited, not to the house, for the ceremony is to propitiate the dead, and inside the home is the last place where they are wanted; but to some river bank, if possible to a temple, if not, to a pīpal tree growing there. The rite consists of a sacrifice (*Homa*) offered to the fire, and three balls of rice representing Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are

placed near it. Thirteen black earthenware pots filled with some black seed, for instance black oil-seed, or black pulse, and also containing the more acceptable gifts of a silver coin and a piece of cloth, are given to the thirteen Brāhmins. Each of the thirteen pots has a thread tied round it and a red mark made on it and is looked on as a god presiding over the alms-giving.

It is easy to say these thirteen pots are to be given to thirteen Brāhmins, but the whole affair is so black and, occurring as it does on the blackest day of the month (the day of Amāvāsyā or new moon), is so sinister, that it is sometimes extremely difficult to find Brāhmins to accept it. All Nāgara, to begin with, are debarred from receiving any gifts, and the most respected Brāhmins of the other classes often decline to accept any alms connected with śrāddha, so inauspicious are all such offerings to the dead. (In some parts of India there are two distinct classes of Brāhmins: those who direct marriage and other auspicious rites, and those who preside over and receive offerings to the dead.)

Learned Brāhmins consider many of these remedies superstitious, some of them being, as we have seen, based on the idea of presenting balls of rice. The necessity for that offering arose in the following way: The Sun always needs the protection of Brāhmins against the demons that attack it. (We shall see this idea expanded in the chapter on a Brāhman's Daily Worship.) One day the Sun called on the Brāhmins to protect him in the usual way by reciting mantras, but unfortunately they made a mistake in their recitation. This lapse enabled the demons to rush in upon the Sun, who only escaped their onslaught by promising them that henceforth they should catch the souls of the dead. It is to persuade the demons to loosen their grip on these dead and let them go quietly and comfortably to Mokṣa that the balls are offered.

7. But, though the preceding remedies may have been tainted with superstition or black magic, there is a seventh way, the

reading of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which is absolutely unimpeachable, and yet efficacious, as the following story shows.

Once upon a time a Brāhman called Gokarna (who was miraculously born of a cow) was much worried by the ghost of a bad dead foster-brother. To lay the ghost, he performed the *Gayā śrāddha*, but got no relief from the unwelcome ghostly attentions; so at last he caused the seventh Purāṇa to be read aloud to him, and on the seventh day a bamboo in the courtyard suddenly broke, and so showed that the bad brother's ghost had ascended by means of it to Mokṣa. Ever since then, when making preparations for the reading, harassed relatives are careful to place a bamboo in their courtyards, as a sort of Jacob's ladder, whereby undesired ghosts may climb to heaven.

The reading is a great affair and is carried out on this wise. On the first day, Gaṇapati, Viṣṇu, and his wife Lakṣmī are worshipped. Then in the evening relatives and friends and caste-fellows all come in to hear a Brāhman read the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which contains the gist of all the other Purāṇas; this reading will be continued for seven nights, and if only the Brāhman can manage to get the whole Purāṇa read through in that time, the malicious ghost will be laid without a doubt.

One Brāhman reads aloud, and five others sit round, and at the end of each mantra tell a bead on their rosaries and ejaculate: 'Salutation to Vāsudeva'.

On the seventh day the reader is presented with clothes and also with a copy of the Bhāgavata, on which there should be placed a lion fashioned of gold, though, to tell the truth, this lion is seldom given now. But, even if he lack the golden lion, the reader makes a good thing out of it, for every one of the relatives and friends who come in to listen gives him something. For instance, a Nāgara gentleman had this ceremony performed not long ago in Rājkot and summoned all his four hundred caste-fellows, who each paid from a rupee to eight annas to the reader.

At the end of the reading a procession is formed: the reader

and his wife (who has also been presented with clothes) are seated in a carriage and pair, and so taken in triumph to their own house. The young wife, whose desire to bear a living child has been the occasion of the ceremony, walks in the procession carrying the Bḥāgavata Purāṇa tied up in a silken cloth ; and later on, if her wishes are fulfilled, she will make a big present to the reader.

The following day a number of Brāhmans, varying from twelve to a hundred, are fed, or, if the husband be very rich, the whole of the caste may be invited. The rite ends with the repetition of the thousand names of Viṣṇu. It should be noted that this 'Seven-Days'-Reading' is not only employed when a disappointed mother desires a child, but is also used sometimes within a year after a funeral, that the spirit of the departed may rise to Mokṣa easily. (Incidentally this also guards the family from the unwelcome attentions of the new ghost.) It is also done as a sort of insurance, when a family is enjoying an unusual run of good luck and prosperity.

We have seen the eagerness with which a childless wife tries to propitiate the unfriendly dead, whom she believes to be hindering the fulfilment of her heart's desire. One reason for that eagerness lies in the fact that, since a man's salvation depends on his having a son to carry out his obsequies, he is allowed to marry during the lifetime of his first wife, if after eight years of wedded life no son is born.

With the Nāgara barrenness is not attributed to the harassing of dead ancestors. Neither do they ever take a new wife during the lifetime of the first.

Again, if a wife has leprosy, consumption, or any incurable disease, or is mad, her husband may marry again. A wife can be put away and replaced amongst the Brāhmans for unfaithfulness,<sup>1</sup> but she can never marry again, as they allow no divorce.

But of all the reasons that may lead a man to take another wife, the most common is that first mentioned, the desire to

<sup>1</sup> A Nāgara would never put his wife away, even for unfaithfulness.

possess a son. Sometimes the wife herself urges the husband to marry again, but more often it is her mother-in-law and father-in-law who persuade him. (Sometimes the mother-in-law out of sheer dislike and desire to spite her daughter-in-law persuades her son, even if he has a boy born to him, to marry again.)

The rites of a second marriage closely resemble those of a first marriage, so (as even the most industrious student will be delighted to hear!) we need not work over them all again. Sometimes there is less glitter, pomp, and feasting, but if the marriage were at the desire of the husband's parents, they will see to it that even these are not lessened.

The result of a second marriage is often disastrous. Of course sometimes, if the husband distributes his favours equally and shares their rooms in turn,<sup>1</sup> a *modus vivendi* is arrived at, which amounts, at best, to a state of armed neutrality; but when the old wife is discarded and treated as a cast-off servant, or when, perhaps, the new wife falls into disfavour, and is thus flung defenceless on the tender mercies of her once defeated but now victorious rival, the atmosphere is more like hell than home; with the awful addition, that the two who hate each other most are condemned to lifelong imprisonment together, hearing all the tittle-tattle of the servants, who carry tales from one part of the house to the other, while the mother-in-law is always at hand to stir up strife and cast fresh fuel on its flames, in an atmosphere, too, shut up and cut off even from the healthy influence of outside opinion.

These endless bickerings and strife and jealousy, leading at last to open quarrelling and sometimes secret poisoning and murder, are making the most enlightened men see that, for their own sake, if they want any rest and healing and joy from their home life, the higher course is also the happy one.

<sup>1</sup> The wives always have their husband's portrait in their rooms, that his may be the first face they see in the morning, and they worship this if they cannot worship him.

A Brāhman could take three or four wives, but the custom of taking only one is growing steadily in favour amongst many of the Twice-born.

Though a Brāhman cannot divorce his wife, he can, as we said, put her aside for leprosy or insanity. Here again the scales are heavily weighted in favour of the man, for no woman can for a similar reason divorce her husband or take another.

Manu says: 'She who shows disrespect to (a husband) who is addicted to (some evil) passion, is a drunkard, or diseased, shall be deserted for three months (and be) deprived of her ornaments and furniture' (Manu IX. 78).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it is extremely important that we Christians should make our own position quite clear about divorce, and explain that within the Christian Church divorce, except for the gravest reasons, is never permitted.

The standard that Queen Victoria set up of not receiving divorced persons at court wins the instant admiration of the Brāhmans.

ADOPTION.<sup>2</sup>—We have seen that if, despite all that religious rites and ceremonies can do, a man still has no son, he may within certain castes of the Twice-born marry again and again. Sometimes, urged by the supreme need of procuring an heir to save his soul, a man will even marry five times. But if, nevertheless, no boy is born to him, in some communities the man is permitted to adopt an heir. The boy may be the son of his daughter or of his granddaughter, or may be related through the man's father or mother, but never through his wife.

When all has been arranged, and the boy's parents have finally given their consent, the astrologer is asked to name an auspicious day on which the rite of adoption may be performed. As soon as that day dawns, the adopter rises and goes through his morning worship. This done, he worships

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* xxv. 341.

<sup>2</sup> It would be wise to add Adoption to the useful little list given on p. 260 of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, London, 1912.



Gaṇeśa in the five- or sixteenfold way, and then offers a *Vṛiddhi Śrāddha* to guard himself against sūtaka or any other impurity. Then the adopting father and his wife perform the rite *Saṅkalpa* together, though the man does all the talking. Holding water in their hands, they say: 'I, so and so,' (mentioning the man's name only) 'will perform the adoption ceremony, in order to pay the debt I owe to my ancestors, and to save myself from the hell called *Put*'.<sup>1</sup>

A special altar has already been erected in the compound, and in this the adopter now offers to the fire clarified butter, sesamum seeds, and sacrificial wood. Then the priest recites appropriate mantras, and every one who can goes in procession to the house of the boy who is to be adopted, all the relatives and friends playing on musical instruments.

Arrived there, the priest (guru) of the adopting father asks the natural father of the boy to give him his son, so that he (the adopter) may be free of all his debts.

The natural father welcomes the adopter in the most cordial way, by making the auspicious dot on his forehead, offering him a seat, garlanding him, and presenting him with areca-nut. When the adopter is comfortably installed, the natural father summons his son and, holding water in his own hand, says:

'I, *so and so*, on *such and such* a day, relinquish for ever my rights as a parent and transfer them for ever to you, *so and so*,' (mentioning the adopter's name) 'in order that you through him may discharge your debts to your ancestors.'

Thus saying, he pours water from his hand into that of the adopting father. Next, taking the boy by his right wrist, he leads him over to the adopting father, who seats him on his own knee. Then, to show that the whole ceremony is complete, the new father solemnly, silently, and steadily smells his new son's head.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Or *Put*.

<sup>2</sup> As the writer has found no reference in books on India to this custom

The head smelt, the new father solemnly goes through a rite which reminds you of St. Francis's renunciation in the market square of Assisi of his father's authority and of the clothes his father had provided, for he removes<sup>1</sup> all the clothes the boy has been wearing, replacing them with new ones, and gives him new jewels, which he himself has brought.

The ceremony ended, the adopting father takes the boy to his new home in a procession, all the women singing.

As the boy enters the house, pretty rites of welcome such as are offered to a bride when she first enters her father-in-law's house<sup>2</sup> are gone through for him, including the waving of a jug full of water and the throwing of balls of earth in all directions.

Then he is taken inside the house and seated on his new mother's lap, who takes all his troubles and removes all his ill luck by three times stretching out her hands towards him, and three times cracking her knuckles against her own forehead.

After this the day is given up to rejoicing, alms are given to Brāhmins, a feast is made to the caste or to relatives, and sweets are distributed amongst children. The whole ceremony is completed in a day, but the feasting is rather costly; so, to lessen expenses, the adoption of a boy is often combined with his investiture with the sacred thread.

The child thus adopted takes the name and family name

of ceremonially smelling the head, she may perhaps here be allowed to put together the cases in which she has found it to be performed. If the father be present at the name-giving ceremony, he often smells the head of his child. If the son grows up and becomes famous in any way, or victorious in war, the father smells his son's head on his return home from council or from war. When an ordinary man returns home for the first time after marriage, his father often does it. The Hindus explain this custom by saying that they intend thereby to remove every evil influence.

At every occasion on which a father smells his son's head, his mother, who cannot do that, takes his worries and ill luck on to her own head by waving her hands towards him and then cracking her knuckles against her own forehead (Guj. *Ovāraṇām levāṇi*).

<sup>1</sup> In actual practice this is sometimes symbolized by slipping new clothes over the old ones.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 102 ff.

of his adopting father. If the natural father be dead, the mother gives her son away. The son, if there be no other, will perform *śrāddha* for both fathers.

The privilege of adopting children is a right of which ruling chiefs are very proud, since only those belonging to the first two classes can do so as of right, chiefs of lesser rank having to ask the permission of Government before adopting.

Some of the best-known Kṣatriya chiefs at the present day were adopted with the rites we have described.<sup>1</sup>

It throws a most vivid light on a Hindu's belief about the future when we remember that it is not only the ruling chief who is anxious to adopt in order that the succession to his state may pass on unbroken, but the ordinary Twice-born, who desires by so doing to save his soul from hell, the hopeless hell of the sonless and therefore *śrāddha*-less.

It is illuminating, too, to learn that nowadays in practice no Indian, be he chief, Brāhman, or man of low caste, ever adopts a daughter ceremonially, with the purpose of getting his *śrāddha* performed; for, no matter with what formality he might take her, she could never perform his funeral rites, or inherit his possessions. But so great is the merit acquired by giving away a daughter in marriage, that a daughterless man does sometimes adopt a girl in order to bestow her on a bridegroom. If he does so, the ceremony is very like the one we have described; he may, however, content himself with paying the expenses of some poor girl's marriage, without formally adopting her, for the merit in both cases is the same.

<sup>1</sup> A chief's adopted son most kindly worked over these notes with the writer.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEATH

Premonitions — Preparation for Death — Last Gifts — Last Hours — The Corpse — The Corpse Worshipped — First Funeral Offerings — The Funeral Procession — The Widow's Seven Steps — The Burning-ground — At the Burning-ground — Lighting the Pyre — A Mother with her Unborn Child — The End of the Pyre — Burials — The Women — The Return — Food and Clothes — Condolence.

WE have studied a Brāhman's life story from the day that his birth brought a veritable rapture of gladness to his mother 'that a man child was born into the world'. We have seen him pass through all the happy ritual of second birth, betrothal, marriage; and now we have to follow him through the dark valley of death.

Once, long centuries ago, as the wise men of Northumbria sat in solemn conclave, to decide whether they would follow the new religion or cleave to the old, a sparrow flitted across the brightly lit hall; an old ealdorman arose and, pointing to the bird, asked if the teachers of the new faith could throw light on the beginning or end of the soul, which, like a sparrow, lingered but for a moment in the light and heat of the hearth-fire, before flying out again into the wintry darkness whence it had come. 'So tarries for a moment', said the old noble, 'the life of man in our sight; what was before it, what shall be after, we know not. Can this religion tell us aught of that?'

And never since have the echoes of his tremendous question died away. Of each and every faith we ask: can this religion tell us aught of the life beyond the grave?

We have now to propound this question to a modern Brāhman, and, as we listen to his answer, we shall find that,

though we have made friends with him in his rejoicing, we get to understand him better in his sorrow, for (with him as with us) the dark valley leads into the secret fastnesses of religion.

Through all his rites and rejoicings a Hindu has been preparing for death, for, as we have so often noted, the thread that strings all the ceremonies together is the imperative desire that the funeral offerings should be perfectly performed.

When a man finds grey hairs appearing close to his ears, he realizes with awe that they are nothing less than the advance messenger of the terrible god of death whispering to him of the approach of his end and warning him to perfect his preparations.

If a man's karma be good, he may, even after these grey hairs have appeared, live for twenty-five years, but if, on the other hand, he should have accumulated evil karma in a previous existence (and he is tragically ignorant whether it be good or bad), his end is near.

The length of a man's life absolutely depends on karma; good actions in a previous life would enable a man to live one hundred and twenty years in most parts of India, but only one hundred and eight in the trying climate of Gujarāt or Kāṭhiāwār. An evil past is responsible for the death of all little babies and young children, who come into this world so weighed down by their own past sins, that they may die in three weeks, three months, or three years. Moreover (as we shall see later), it is this inheritance of their own hoarded evil that is responsible for the death of all the golden boys on the fields of Flanders, who, in the *karmic*, not in the Shakespearean, sense, 'home have gone and ta'en their wages'. It was their maleficent karma, and not their gallantry or their unselfishness, which decided that they were to be killed in leading their men, or in trying to rescue a comrade.

Once, however, grey hairs appear, a man should be on the look-out for other signs which will tell him if death be near. Of course there are obvious indications, such as ill health;

failing strength, loss of appetite and of sleep, &c. ; but there are other less obvious but more important ones. Before death a man's disposition, as well as his constitution, entirely alters : if he has been sweet-tempered (the most admired of all virtues amongst Indians), he now becomes irritable, and if formerly irritable, he is now good-tempered.

A still clearer sign is that the different gods inhabiting a man's body take their leave. Their absence can be at once detected : if a man puts his fingers to his ears and hears no buzzing inside his head, that is a distinct token that the god reigning over the ears (Vāyu) has departed from him ; in the same way, there are tests to see if the god of the eyes (Sūrya), of the nose (Aśvinī Kumāra), of the hands (Indra), of the feet (Viṣṇu), and of the mind (Āndra) have all left their thrones.

Another sign that tells a man death is at most but six months off is, that when he looks at the sky at night, though to others it is plain, yet he himself cannot distinguish Arundhatī (one of the seven stars<sup>1</sup> of the great Bear, and the wife of the great sage Vasiṣṭha).

Further, when a man who is about to die goes to bed, he dreams that he is embracing dead bodies, or putting on a garland of red flowers, or travelling southward toward the abode of the god Yama ; or that he has no clothes on, or is perhaps besmeared with oil.

Another way of ascertaining whether death is threatening a man, or any member of his household, is for the head of the family to stand right out in the marvellous Indian moonlight and examine his shadow. First he looks at the throat of the shadow cast on the ground, and then, repeating a mantra, gazes at the sky, where he will see the shadowy outlines of a huge figure. If this figure lack the right hand, his brother's death is near ; if the left hand be missing, his own wife's death is foretold ; but if the figure cast on the sky be a headless one,

<sup>1</sup> Alcor.

let him make all haste with his preparations, for his own death is at hand.

Portents will not be lacking in the daytime either: for instance, if, when a man puts his wrist to his nose, it appears quite thick; or if, when he squints, he cannot see the tip of his nose, he is frightened, and with reason, for it is death that is bending his nose.

It is impossible to exaggerate the horror with which a man gathers from these or any other indications that his time is short.

When warned of the approach of death, a wise man frequently repeats the word *AUM*.<sup>1</sup> This monosyllable, without which no mantra is efficacious and no rite complete, is the shortest form in which a Hindu can think of Brahma (the Paramātmān). He is without form, without name, without qualities, but mortals needed something to represent him, and so this word was given. Later, men found in it three letters connoting the Vedic triad: 'A' representing Brahmā, 'U' Viṣṇu, 'M' Śiva, and the mark over it all representing the female counterparts of these three gods.

A man should often repeat the name, in order that, however suddenly he dies, it may be the last word on his lips, for that ensures his spirit's passing direct to Mokṣa, without any delay or detention. In Vedic times they say a Brāhman made other preparations for death; for, as soon as his son's son was born, he began to think it time to retire as a hermit or anchorite (*Vānaprastha*) to some forest,<sup>2</sup> and would ask his wife whether she wished to accompany him.

<sup>1</sup> A Hindu says that, if deep breaths are taken, with the hands so arranged over the face that the ears are closed by the thumbs, the eyes shut by the first fingers, and the nose with the second fingers, wondrous sounds are heard: First, the tolling of bells, then exquisite music, and last of all the mystic syllable *Om* (*AUM*) is breathed. If a man be bereaved, or injured, or worried, and he hear this word, all his unhappiness disappears.

<sup>2</sup> Nowadays few Brāhmans retire to the forest; and, on asking the reason, the writer was told that it was partly because nearly all the forests, which used to be full of custard-apples and other delights, had been cut down; but partly, too, lest the Forest Department should ask fees for the

In modern times it is more usual for a householder (*Grihastha*) to pass straight to the fourth stage of mendicant (*Sannyāsi*), and omit the third or hermit period.

There is no doubt that a Brāhman (like a Jaina) gains great advantage by becoming a mendicant before he dies, and his relatives will in that case not have to offer any funeral offerings for him to secure his happiness after death. One reason for this is, as we shall see later, that he had already offered his own śrāddha when he died to the world; another reason is that, when a Sannyāsi dies, the very fact of his being a mendicant ensures that his soul will pass out through one of the upper apertures of his body, such as nose, eyes, or mouth. But it is better still if the soul leaves the body by the *Brahmarandhra* (the soft part of the skull, which is the last to join up in the case of infants), and so, after death, the Sannyāsi's skull is often broken there by a blow from a conch-shell; indeed it is sometimes so broken when the ascetic is in the throes of death! Such extreme measures will not be needed if a man has practised *Yoga*, or intense contemplation, for that by itself will have opened the soft place in the skull, and so the soul will quite naturally find its way out through that, the highest of all the orifices. But the soul of a wicked man passes out by the lower apertures of the body, and by so doing acquires such defilement that endless purifications are necessary.

If a man decide to become a Sannyāsi on his death-bed, his head is shaved, and he dons the saffron-coloured robes, going through all the ceremonies of initiation, no matter how ill he is, and, as he must respond, the ceremony must be complete before the dying man loses consciousness. Such a death-bed ascetic is called an *Ātura Sannyāsi*.

fruit on which the hermit would have to subsist, and for which (having left his purse behind him in the world) he would be quite unable to pay. Another reason, more generally accepted, is that nowadays men do not possess the power of endurance which would enable them to support the hardships of the ascetic life, such as living in water up to the chin in winter, or sitting between five fires in summer.



Even if the patient does not become an ascetic, as soon as the doctor gives up hope, the friends of the dying man make eight kinds of gifts on his behalf.

1. First, they present a Brāhman with *cotton-pods*. The explanation commonly given for this somewhat strange gift is that years ago cotton-pods were accepted as current coin, and so this is equivalent to a gift of money to the Brāhman.

2. It is easy to understand the reason for the second gift, *iron vessels*, for iron is supposed to keep off all the attacks of Yama, the god of death, and to ward off evil spirits.

3. The third thing that the relatives give is *salt*. Hindus call this the juice of all things, and say that, when they give salt, they thereby give everything. (It is this belief that salt is the best of all things that, as we shall see, makes Hindus rise at dawn on New Year's Day to buy salt, for they are determined that their first purchase in the New Year shall be the best possible, and so ensure that good luck shall follow them all the twelve months.)

4. *Earth* must next be given. If it were a rich man or a rājā who lay dying, he would give a field or a village to a Brāhman, but an ordinary man gives the Brāhman a piece of turf with a rupee or two.

5. The gift of *grain* follows. Pulse, wheat, rice of various kinds, may all be given, but it is interesting and important to note that neither now nor in any other ceremony is a particular kind of millet ever given to a Brāhman as alms. The word for this grain, *bājari*, connotes also a span of life, and so the man who gave away millet would give away his life (which no one is willing to do even to a Brāhman!) and, should a dying man inadvertently give away millet, it is believed that at that very instant his breath would leave his body.

6. *Clarified butter* (that impregnable base of all Indian cookery) is the sixth gift.

7. The seventh consists of *laddus*. These tennis-ball-like sweets are always as much to the taste of a Brāhman as a lord is to an Englishman.

At this time, however, the laḍḍu given to the Brāhman is gilded, or at any rate contains a secret gift of a gold coin hidden inside it. Even the poorest man manages at this crisis in his life to put some piece of gold, however minute, into the laḍḍu.

8. But the last and eighth gift, that of a *cow*, is the most important of all. If a man could not afford actually to give a cow, he would strive his utmost to find the five rupees that conventionally represent its value, and if even that proved impossible, he would offer five annas. It is only by holding on to the tail of a cow that the dying man hopes to cross the horrible river of blood and filth, called *Vaitaraṇī*, which flows to the south between the earth and that abode of Yama to which every soul has to go after death. If an actual animal is given, it should be brought into the dying man's room for him to see it. If possible, its horns should be adorned with gold, its hoofs with silver, and its back with copper. It ought to wear a woman's *sārī*, or at least a piece torn from a woman's dress, and round its horns some green cloth should be worn; it should be further ornamented with a necklace of bells, and its tail should be bedecked with pearls, or, if these are not forthcoming (and they seldom are!), at any rate with beads. Above all, the cow must be without flaw in person or temper (that is to say, it may neither be lame nor a kicker!) and it must have its calf with it.

If the dying man has the physical strength, he should take the cow's tail in his hand and present it, together with a *tulasī* leaf, to a Brāhman. (The leaf and the *tulasī* plant symbolize Viṣṇu's consort, and any alms given should always be accompanied with the gift of a *tulasī* leaf, otherwise they may fail of their reward.) If the man is too desperately ill to stand the fuss of the actual cow being brought into his sick room, they quietly put a rope into his hand, the other end of which is tied round the cow's neck outside the room, and he gives this to the Brāhman. Whilst the gift is being made, the family priest repeats the appropriate mantras, and the Brāhman who

receives the cow says : ' *Svasti* (may it be well [with thee] ), as he takes it.

But besides these eight gifts, every Brāhman who comes to the house whilst the man is dying receives special alms called *Āmāna*, consisting of wheat and clarified butter.

A lamp<sup>1</sup> is filled with clarified butter and burned beside the sick man (a lamp is always lit at the time of worship as witness), and the family priest is called and asked to read from the *Bhagavadgītā* or the *Upaniṣad*, or to repeat the thousand names of Viṣṇu.

All this takes place while the man is conscious, but when he seems to have only about an hour, or even less, to live, he is moved from his bedstead on to a bed made up on the floor. The belief is that, if a man were to die on a bedstead, he would return after death as an evil spirit, since the bedstead is high up from the ground, with space between earth and sky which demons inhabit. In the meantime the ground near the mattress is plastered with cow-dung and sprinkled with water from the Ganges, and on the space thus sanctified darbha-grass, barley, and sesamum grains are scattered.

When the man is evidently *in articulo mortis*, he is carefully lifted from the mattress on to this prepared space. Old and experienced people are always asked to be present at death-beds, that they may decide when the exact moment has come to move the sufferer from the mattress on to the floor; for, though it would not be so terrible a thing as if he were to die on a bedstead, yet, if he were to draw his last breath from the mattress, he would still become a ghost or an evil spirit.

To guard still further against his becoming a ghost, the dying man's head has been previously shaved of all hair save the sacred lock (*Śikhā*).

When the expiring man is placed on the ground, his near relatives all offer vows in order to help him to reach Mokṣa and to provide him with food and water on his journey thither.

<sup>1</sup> This lamp may be on a stand, but is more likely to be on the ground. This is the only time a lamp may be placed on the ground.

Some promise to water pīpal trees, or to give a jug of water to a Brāhman; others promise to throw grains to pigeons, or to feed a Brāhman for a year, or to fast on the eleventh (*Ekādaśī*) of every fortnight for a year or more. (They will perform, or begin to perform, these vows after the thirteenth day, when the house has been purified.)

The dead man's forehead is smeared with white clay (*Gopī śandana*) brought from the sacred city of Dvārakā, or with sacred ashes, or in some cases a red or white mark of sandal-wood paste is made on the centre of the forehead. (If a woman dies before her husband, and so escapes for ever from the supreme dread of every Indian woman, that of becoming a widow, she is considered so lucky that her face, and especially her forehead, is smeared with red.)

A tulasī leaf is put into the mouth of the corpse, together with a piece of silver and a piece of gold. So essential is it to have gold in the mouth at the time of death, that people often have some of the precious metal inserted between their teeth during their lifetime, to ensure its being there after death.

The corpse is now purified by having drops of water<sup>1</sup> taken from both the rivers Ganges and Jamnā poured into its mouth, and, still with the object of purification, incense is burned. If the dead man were a bachelor of marriageable age, a red auspicious mark would be made on his forehead, and a fruit of the god of love (*madana-phala*) is tied on to his right wrist. In the writer's part of India all dead bodies are arranged so as to look to the south, i.e. with feet to the south and head to the north. (In some other places the opposite is the case.)

Sometimes, before this is done, to ascertain that death has actually taken place, a lump of congealed clarified butter is put on the forehead, and if it does not melt, it is taken as a sign that life is extinct. When this is certain, the syllable *Om* is whispered in the ear of the corpse by his son or near relative, others take up the word and say it more and more

<sup>1</sup> This water is usually, but not invariably, taken from the junction of the two rivers near Allahābād.

loudly, and it is the repetition of this word that announces the death to every one in the house.

If a mistake has been made, and after the word *Om* has been repeated and the death announced an old man should recover, it is considered very inauspicious, especially for his eldest son, but if the mistake has been made in the case of a young man, it is not nearly so unlucky.

It is thought auspicious if a woman die during the night; for, as a corpse cannot be removed from a house after sundown, it will have to remain in the house all night. The explanation given to the writer was that every woman, living or dead, is the incarnation of Lakṣmī, but especially after death; so it is very auspicious to have Lakṣmī remaining in the house all night.

On the other hand, it is very unlucky if the father of a family die during the night, and some misfortune is sure to overtake his surviving sons; but it is fortunate for every one if he dies in the morning. We saw that a corpse could not be taken to the burial-ground after sunset, but if a man dies even a few minutes before the sun goes down, the mourners take the body there, though it may involve their sitting beside the pyre, perhaps in the bitter winter cold, from seven o'clock to midnight.

A dead body is holy, so cannot be touched by any one who is unbathed, nor can it be wrapped save in a silk cloth, or, if that is not forthcoming, in a newly washed and still wet one. Such a cloth must be bought from the bazaar expressly for the purpose, and when washed must be washed in holy water, i. e. running water (even from a pipe), not water stored in the house in jars. The body of an old man who has died between sixty and eighty years of age is wrapped in white cloth, that of a middle-aged man of forty or fifty in red, whilst the corpse of a dearly-loved young man is sometimes clothed in rich brocade. They wrap the body of a married woman who is so fortunate as to die whilst her husband is living in rich red, or bright green, or any other gaily-coloured material, but a widow in white, blue, or black silk.

Whilst the body is in the house, it is looked on as a god : Lakṣmī, in the case of a woman, Viṣṇu, if it be a man who has died ; and now they pay it divine honours. The children, widow, or husband come in and bow to the corpse, and then circumambulate<sup>1</sup> it three times. It is important to notice that this circumambulation is done in the auspicious direction with the right hand nearest to the dead body, and that, as we shall see, when the corpse is on the pyre, they do it with the left hand nearest ; just now the uppermost thought in their mind is the divinity of the corpse, not its inauspiciousness. Lamps filled with camphor are sometimes burnt at this time in front of the corpse.

Another note worthy of detail is that the face of the corpse is not covered, even if it is that of a young woman, and that none of the young women who walk round it veil their faces either.

Male members of the family who are senior to the dead man or woman do not circumambulate the corpse, but simply go up to it and, standing reverentially, look down on the still upturned face. All this takes place in utter silence, for no one may weep or mourn aloud for some half-hour or so after the actual death, by which time this worship will have been completed.

After all the household have done the dead man reverence, they pass silently out of the room, all but one man of mature age and such strong nerves that he is not afraid of being left alone with the dead. His special duty is to guard the holy body from the approach of any unclean animal, and in particular to see that no cat enters the room by stealth, for, being an unclean animal, its merest touch would pollute the sacred corpse.

From this point in the ceremony the body is looked on as an offering to Agni. The women of the household now begin to weep and to wail and to beat their breasts, and servants are sent out to tell the news to the members of the caste. These now begin to arrive in funeral dress, the men wearing no coats, but

<sup>1</sup> This is not done if the woman has died in child-birth ; see below, p. 151.

only a shirt, a loin-cloth round the waist and another over the shoulders, and, instead of turbans, short scarves wound round their heads. The women come clad in black sārīs and black bodices, with no flowers or nose-rings or auspicious marks on their forehead. The first person whom the servant tells is the priest, and to him, as to every one else, he only says: 'So-and-so is very ill', to avoid giving a shock.

In the meantime some members of the household go to the bazaar and buy the following articles: a piece of white cloth, two thick bamboo poles, a black earthen pot in which to carry fire, string, cotton thread, coco-nut, and sandal-wood weighing about a pound. (When these particular things are bought, the sellers know the purpose for which they are wanted and never ask for money, for haggling at such a time would be most unlucky. After a week or two some member of the family goes and pays for them, but if they are not paid, the shop-keepers simply write them off as a bad debt; for if the family is too poor to pay for them, the shop-keepers feel that they must help with the funeral.) After the things are purchased, the members of the family make a ladder-like arrangement of the two bamboos and the string.

In the meantime the priest is engaged in making the first of the numerous funeral offerings. This ceremony is called *Pathika* (lit. the traveller) and consists of offering five balls made of wheat flour and water beside the dead body. The first ball is offered to the spirit of the *plot of earth* on which the corpse is now lying. The second is offered to the spirit of the *threshold* over which the dead body is to be carried. (As a rule, the corpse is carried through the ordinary house door, but if a Vedic sacrifice or a wedding is going on when death occurs, a new door has to be made in the wall, since auspicious festoons are hanging over the ordinary door.) The third ball is offered to the spirit of the *cross-roads* of the village through which the corpse will be carried. If the village does not contain a junction of four roads, then this ball will be offered to the spirit of two cross-roads. On the way to the funeral

pyre the bearers rest the corpse on an appointed platform (*Viśvāma*), and the fourth ball is dedicated to the spirit of this temporary resting-place. The fifth ball is offered to *Agni* in the funeral pyre.

It sometimes happens that darbha-grass too is offered. In every month there are five consecutive days on which it is inauspicious to die (the dates of these days differ every month), and if the dead man has passed away on one of these days, five knotted blades of darbha-grass must be placed in the piece of cloth in which the balls are tied up before being placed on the bier and carried with it to the burning-ground.

The body is now dressed for the funeral. In the case of a man, only a new loin-cloth is left on, together with a rosary of one hundred and eight tulasī leaves, or of ten *Rudrākṣa* berries ('the eyes of Rudra'), or just one *Rudrākṣa* berry. He is also made to wear a new sacred thread on his left shoulder, the old one having been thrown away after life was extinct and a new one put on in its stead.

A dead married woman is clothed in her best sārī, bodice, and skirt, and adorned with some gold ornament; a widow is robed in black silk.

Six or more men lift the corpse on to the bier. Whether it be that of a man or a woman, the two big toes are tied together, the legs arranged to lie straight, and the arms straightened and put close to the sides. The body is then tied tightly to the bier and so placed that it is carried out feet foremost. The eyes have been carefully closed before death and so remain.

As they lift the bier up, the bearers all say 'Om', and they keep on repeating this sacred word till they reach the gate of the compound. After that is passed, they and all the followers cry: 'Rāma! Rāma! Call on Rāma, brothers'. (When the writer asked why followers of Śiva call on Rāma and not on Śiva, she was told that Rāma's name might be employed in every case, even if the man were unholy, whereas Śiva's name is sacrosanct.)



In order to purify the ground over which the bier must be carried from the touch of the countless low-caste feet that have trodden it, men go ahead and sprinkle the road with water from the Ganges, and if it is a young man or woman who has died, milk is also sprinkled immediately in front of the bier.

All the bearers of the bier have bathed, and wear no shoes (out of reverence to the holiness of the corpse), no turbans, shirts, or coats, but only wet loin-cloths.

And now to look for a moment at the whole procession. The first thing one sees is the man sprinkling water over the road; then, perhaps, the man sprinkling milk; next comes a man carrying the fire (that has been taken from the dead man's house) in a black earthen pot; and immediately after him the bier, for nothing may ever come between the dead body, which is an offering to Agni, and Agni itself, which is carried in the earthenware jar. The frail bier is carried shoulder high<sup>1</sup> by the sons, the nearest relatives, or other members of the same gotra, all crying *Rāma, Rāma bolo, bhāi*,<sup>1</sup> and followed by a crowd of men.

There are no women in this crowd, for they are not allowed to follow the procession to the burning-ground; but before the *cortège* leaves the compound, the wife of the dead man performs a most pathetic rite. In memory of the seven ritual steps that she had taken amid all the jubilant rejoicing that surrounded her wedding, when she was looked on as almost divine, she, now a broken-hearted widow, with nothing to look forward to during the rest of her life save sorrow, again takes seven steps, this time following the lifeless body of her bridegroom, as witness even in her sorrow that she has performed the vows promised in her gladness. It would be impossible to describe a contrast that more tears the heart-strings.

In most towns there are several burning-grounds; for instance, where the writer lives there is one for the family of the reigning prince, another for the Nāgara, and a third for high-

<sup>1</sup> A Nāgara does not say *bolo bhāi*, but only *Rāma*.

caste Hindus, including other Brāhmans, another for such folk as Bhils and Kolīs, and a fifth for outcastes (Sweepers, Dheds, &c.).<sup>1</sup>

In the writer's town the corpse may be carried out to the burning-ground through any of the city gates, but this is not always the case. In certain towns particular gates are prescribed for the passage of the dead, generally the gate to the south of the city.

It is the State which decides where the burning-grounds are to be fixed, and if any one desires to burn their dead in another place, express permission<sup>2</sup> has to be obtained from the State.

If the dead man was a Nāgara, the *cortège* would pass directly to the burning-ghāt without rest or re-arrangement.

But with certain other Brāhmans, it halts when it reaches the little masonry platform called the Viśrāma, and there four coco-nuts are taken from the bier, to which they had been tied, and are broken. The bier is then turned round, so that the head of the dead is carried first.

On reaching the burning-ground, the body, which sometimes is and sometimes is not washed with water in the house after death, is now purified by being immersed in water up to the knees. Stones are specially arranged on the river bank to support the body during this baptism after death.

Then the pyre is built. The ground is swept and purified by having Ganges water sprinkled over it, and one copper coin is put on it as rent for the use of the ground. Heavy logs (preferably of *bāvala* wood) are first laid on the ground to the height of a foot and a half, and upon this less expensive ordinary wood is laid, till the whole pyre is about seven feet long and two and a half broad. If it could be afforded, the

<sup>1</sup> Very often Bhils and outcastes cannot afford to burn the whole body because of the cost of the wood, so they content themselves with burning the right toe and bury the rest of the body.

<sup>2</sup> The old Kāthī chiefs of Kāthiāwār, however, are not burned at the river bank; any Kāthī who is of princely blood can be burned in his own garden, and afterwards a temple will be raised on the spot, the ashes of the dead man being used in the foundation of the temple.

upper part of the pyre would be built of sandal-wood, but as this is too expensive for any but ruling chiefs, the pyre is generally made of ordinary wood with the addition of about one pound of sandal-wood.

On this the body is laid, arranged, in the case of most Brāhmans, so as to face the north, but in some parts of India to face the south. Appropriate mantras are said and balls of wheat offered.

The body is covered with cow-dung cakes, and a heavy log is placed, on the chest of the corpse if that of a man, and on the waist if it is that of a woman. In the case of an Agni-hotṛī the ceremony is more elaborate, and articles of worship, such as pots, spoons, &c., are burnt with him.

The nearest relative who bears the dead man's surname lights the pyre by setting some of the fire that has been brought from the house against the dead man's thumb, repeating, as he does so, the sacred word 'Om'. The caste-fellows and other spectators sit about two hundred yards off, only closest relatives remaining near the pyre. In actual practice it is nearly always the eldest son of the dead man, or the husband of the dead wife, who lights the pyre, but if a ruling chief dies, his eldest son cannot attend the funeral,<sup>1</sup> neither can a king ever go to a burning-ground, and in such a case a younger son lights the fire. The reason is that a king or a ruling chief<sup>2</sup> is too holy ever to be affected by sūtaka (he cannot even wear a white turban as a sign of mourning), for in himself he possesses divinity, having the power of the guardians of the eight quarters and some of the essence of Viṣṇu. If there are no relatives, any one who is desirous of earning merit may offer to bear the expense of the funeral (altogether it would cost, including śrāddha, from one hun-

<sup>1</sup> As a throne may never be empty, the son of a chief is proclaimed immediately on the death of his father, and a short ceremony of installation is performed before the corpse is removed from the palace.

<sup>2</sup> A most notable exception to this was made by H.H. the present Thākōr Sāheb of Gondal, who, to do honour to his old friend and tutor, Dr. Argyll Robertson, not only attended the funeral, but himself lit the funeral pyre.

dred and fifty to five hundred rupees) ; for a man who, from motives of pure charity, burns a corpse gains merit equal to that acquired in the ancient rite of horse sacrifice.

If a man die away from home in such a way that no corpse can be found, being perhaps drowned, blown to pieces by a shell, or devoured by a tiger, the relatives, after waiting for some little time, make a body of darbha-grass, generally about the size of a doll, and burn it with precisely the same rites as we have described. Strictly speaking, the grass body should have been made at the house and carried in procession through the town ; as a matter of actual practice, however, it is nearly always woven at the river-side near the place where it is burnt.

If a woman die in child-birth, her body is not considered holy until it has been bathed at the burning-ground. The ground over which the procession passes is not purified by sprinkling with Ganges water or milk, but Brāhmans go ahead scattering mustard-seed, or rice in the husk, and unground white millet.<sup>1</sup> The men who lift and carry the bier and the men who follow wear ordinary clothes (not wet ones) and keep on their shoes. As the corpse is unholy, it cannot represent Lakṣmī, and there is no circumambulation of it in the house.

Arrived at the burning-ground, the bearers bathe the corpse, dressed as it was at the moment of death, one hundred and eight times, and then, with most Brāhmans, the ordinary ritual is performed, and the mother and her unborn child are burned together.<sup>2</sup>

With the Nāgara, however, if the child is still unborn, a most tragic rite has to be performed before the dead body can be burned, and no one who has heard a Nāgara describe it could doubt that, though the body of the mother and her unborn child is regarded as ritually unholy, yet it is neither unloved nor unreverenced. A screen is erected near the

<sup>1</sup> White millet is also scattered on the ground before the body of a chief or important landowner.

<sup>2</sup> Rigorists say, however, that the Nāgara procedure ought to be observed.

burial ground, and behind it the husband, if he can bear to do it, if not, some close relative, opens the dead body and takes out the dead child. Even if the husband is too heart-broken to perform the whole rite, his hand must be the first to touch the body with the knife. The operator does his dread task with the greatest reverence, trying as far as possible to work with closed eyes.

The little baby's body is taken away to be buried at some child's cemetery, but the mother's body, after being bathed one hundred and eight times, is considered ritually pure and burned in the ordinary way.

If the mother has died after the child's birth, but before she was ritually pure, her body is bathed immediately after death one hundred and eight times in the house, and is then carried in the ordinary way to the pyre.

In any case, however, the pyre is lit by the chief mourner, and burns usually for about three and a half hours. At intervals during the time clarified butter is poured on, and mantras are repeated. As the fire goes out, the chief mourner circumambulates the pyre from left to right (the inauspicious direction) four times (the inauspicious number).

He finally extinguishes the embers, when the body and the wood have been burnt up, by throwing water on them. The ashes are then collected and thrown into the river. Any tiny fragments of bone that remain are carried back to the house, and later taken to Gayā or Siddhpur, or thrown into some other sacred water, such as the Dāmodar Kuṇḍa near Jūna-gaḍh.

A ball of wheat is offered to these one or two fragments, and the black earthen pot which originally held the fire is broken in pieces with a stone.

After this every one bathes, repeating as they do so the word 'Om', and being careful not to choose that place where the *dhobi* washes the clothes, since that is impure. Still wearing their wet clothes, they go back to the spot where the body has been burnt and pour water on it from their hands, with

their right thumbs down. They then change into dry clothes. The actual bearers of the bier, who, it will be remembered, had to walk from the house unshod and in wet clothes because of the holiness of the corpse, change into dry clothes directly the pyre is lit. These, however, bathe again now with the other mourners, and again change their clothes.

If the family is rich, they will perhaps arrange for a cow to be milked over the exact spot where the body was burnt for thirteen days.

When a ruling chief dies, his finest war horse follows in the procession immediately in front of the bier; when the corpse has been burnt and the ashes collected, the horse is given away to some Sweeper (*Bhangī*).

Before observing what the women do whilst the body is burning, we may perhaps pause here for a moment to notice one or two cases in which a corpse is not burned, but buried.

We have already seen that a little child of under eighteen months is not burnt but buried, and that an ascetic is buried in an upright position, his body being surrounded with salt; but it is not so well known that, if a leper dies, or a man suffering from smallpox, he is not burnt, but buried with salt, only in a recumbent posture. The writer was told that the diseased corpses could not be burnt for fear of infection,<sup>1</sup> and that they were buried lying down because of their sins and the amount of evil karma that they had accumulated.

If a man breaks caste by becoming either a Muḥammadan or a Christian, he is treated as though dead to the family. His senior relative places a black earthen pot on his right shoulder, throws it to the ground, and thus breaks it, just as we saw was done at the conclusion of the ceremony at the burning-ground. All the relatives then bathe, to show that the man is dead to them, and after that never mention his name again. On the great annual Śrāddha days an

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, even the corpses of smallpox or leprosy patients are often burned nowadays, though rigorists do not approve.

extra ball of rice is offered for a man who has so broken caste.<sup>1</sup>

But now to return to the house. After the men have left, the women all go to the nearest bathing-place and try approximately to time their bathing to the moment when the pyre is lit. They then return home and sit and weep. (We shall study later the special mourning of the widow.)

As the men approach the house on their return from the burning-ground, the nearest relatives to the dead say 'Om', and the women reply 'Rāma'. (Women do not usually repeat the word 'Om'.)

The funeral party then sit outside the house of the dead man and weep and console each other till the new head of the house gives them permission to go. Before entering their own house, every member of the funeral procession washes his hands and his feet, and, if it is one of the five inauspicious days of the month, also bathes completely and washes his clothes.

Now, and only now, is the son or chief mourner, on whom all the responsibility for the funeral rested, allowed to weep.

If the death has occurred early in the morning, there is no time to cook, and so near relatives who are also under sūtaka would ask the mourners to eat in their houses.

They would not eat wheaten bread, or milk, or much clarified butter, and some would not take rice. On the actual day of the funeral they would not drink tea, and strict people would not take it or anything sweet for thirteen days.

The rules vary with different families, some not eating rice and pulse in the evening, and others refusing various favourite dishes for these thirteen days.

The mourning dress for women in certain parts of India is black, for young girls blue, sārīs, whilst men wear white turbans. In some princely families a white carpet is spread during the time of mourning.

<sup>1</sup> This is not, however, done when a man joins the Brahma or Ārya Samāj.

Women do not wash their hair, and neither they nor men make the auspicious mark on their foreheads whilst *sūtaka* lasts, for, as we shall see later, no worship can be performed during *sūtaka*.

Any one is free to go to a wedding or not as he likes, when invited; but a funeral is far more formal, and not only is every friend, acquaintance, and caste-fellow supposed to go to the funeral, but he is also obliged to go and pay a visit of condolence; trade rivals, and even actual enemies, must do so too.

Every evening from five o'clock onwards the elders of the family sit for about an hour and a half and receive these visitors, the men going to the men, and the women to the women. Each visitor stays about five minutes, and, however much he may have disliked the dead man, he spends those five minutes praising him. As there is *sūtaka*, no refreshment can be offered to a guest, neither can he be given leave to go in the polite formula that asks him to come again; instead, his host indicates when he has had enough of him and his condolence by the blank command—'Get up and go'.

The women and their friends weep and bewail the dead during these visits.

Brahmans (unlike Rājputs and Kāṭhīs) do not hire mourners,<sup>1</sup> but women of the family weep for nine days. Lest excessive grief should injure their health, a priest is called after the first day, who, to try and divert their minds, reads to them the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, in which Viṣṇu tells the eagle of the condition of mortals after death, and which also gives directions for *śrāddha*. Both men and women come and listen to this reading and draw consolation from it.

<sup>1</sup> These hired mourners are always women. They all dress in black and cover their faces. The leader stands on a platform and wails out such sentences as 'Alas! He died before he became a grandfather', 'He died before he gained fame as a soldier', and all the other hired mourners, standing round in a circle, respond 'Alas! alas!'



## CHAPTER VIII

### FUNERAL OFFERINGS

The Soul after Death—Sūtaka.

TENTH DAY ŚRĀDDHA—Removal of Sūtaka.

ELEVENTH DAY: Worship of Viṣṇu and of Satyeśa—Sacrifice for Sins—Worship of the Five Gods—Ekādaśa Śrāddha—Fivefold Śrāddha—Marriage of Calves—Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha—Funeral Feasts.

TWELFTH DAY: Rite of Union—Offerings to Crows.

THIRTEENTH DAY.—Preta.

WE shall understand the funeral ceremonies better if we pause here for a moment and examine the conflicting popular beliefs concerning the adventures that befall the soul after death, for it is these beliefs that decide the actual ritual. Immediately after death the soul of a man is not clothed in a physical body (*Sthūla Śarīra*), but in the *Līṅga Śarīra*, which, though it has in all seventeen senses, can neither eat nor drink, and is only the size of a thumb. The moment the thumb-sized vaporous soul leaves the body, two frightful servants of Yama seize it, carry it along for ninety-nine thousand leagues, and present it to Yama (this is, as it were, a preliminary going to Yama, to prove that the right person has been summoned and no mistake made), after which they bring it straight back again to the gate of its own house.

According to the popular belief, it is most important that the dead body should be burnt whilst the soul is away, lest it should re-enter its own corpse, and this is the reason why any delay in taking the body to the burning-ground is avoided.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Gujarātī saying runs: 'The soul is linked with the breath. O brother, after that has gone, do not keep the body a minute in the house.'

The little thumb-sized vaporous body remains at the door of its former house for thirteen days<sup>1</sup> and, having no physical body, can take neither food nor water.

Some castes offer a śrāddha on the third day after the death, when they go again to the burning-ground and collect the ashes. But, though in former times the Brāhmans of Kāthiāwār also used to offer the first ball on the third day, with the object of forming a physical body and satisfying its cravings, they now wait till after the sūtaka, or ceremonial defilement, has been partially removed on the tenth day, before offering any śrāddha. Even the śrāddha that they offer on the tenth day is impure (*Malina Śoḍaśī*) because, as we shall see, they are not even then ceremonially pure from sūtaka.

We have already studied the sūtaka which accrued to the members of a family on the occasion of a birth, but the ceremonial defilement is far heavier when a death takes place. So heavy indeed is this death sūtaka (*Mṛitaka Sūtaka*), that a Brāhman on the day of the death cannot immediately put pen to paper to say there has been a death and so account for his absence from his work and engagements, a fact which often leads to real embarrassment.<sup>2</sup>

The defilement begins to be lightened on the ninth day after the death, when every member of the caste must go to the temple of Śiva. The men go first, and then the women; before entering the temple, they wash their faces and feet, and then go in, and, beholding the face of the idol (*darśana*), they pray for the peace of the dead man's soul.

The priest then offers a lamp of clarified butter to the idol.

Some Brāhmans,<sup>3</sup> before setting out to visit the temples, chew a mixture of *nīm* leaves, areca-nut, and black earth, and

<sup>1</sup> According to another belief, for the first nine nights the soul of the dead man is going on a fearful journey, sometimes over heated sand, sometimes through forests all on fire, and at other times through such dense forests that no ray of light penetrates their black depths. To light the soul through these dark glades, a lamp of clarified butter is sent to the temple for the first nine nights after the death.

<sup>2</sup> He may write on his return from the burning-ground.

<sup>3</sup> This is not done by the Nāgara.

when arrived at the temple scatter white millet grain before the idol.

In other Twice-born (though not necessarily Brāhman) castes this temple-visiting is done on the second or third day after the death. The whole caste goes to the temple, the chief mourner (who may be either the eldest or the youngest son), who lit the pyre, wearing on his shoulder a piece of white unwashed fringed cloth. The cloth is folded in four and marked with a red *svastika*, and the chief mourner has a straight vertical line on his forehead. They all wash their faces and feet outside the temple and 'behold the face' of the idol Śiva, just as the Brāhmans, we saw, did, and on returning home give millet to the pigeons. But, whilst feeding the pigeons, they perform a most symbolic act. They first fill the measure in the ordinary way four times, and then, holding the measure upside down, they attempt four times to fill it. They say that they do this to typify the departure of the dead empty-handed—that it was as impossible for him to take any possession with him as it is for them to make any millet grain remain in an upturned measure. They then take a slate and write the digit 4 (in Sanskrit ४) four times and then four times reversed thus ५. This digit four is called Black or Dirty Four. After this has been done, letters are written in black ink to relatives, telling them of the death and bidding them to the funeral feast.

On the tenth day all the younger members of the family have their moustaches shaved off, and the sūtaka presses less heavily than on the day before.

The chief mourner (who had lit the pyre) goes with the family priest to some place outside the town near a river and there performs the first śrāddha.

Śrāddha is perhaps the most important rite in Hinduism, and the desire to have it rightly performed for himself, and to perform it rightly for his own father, sways a Brāhman's whole life.

The horror of dying unshriven that coloured men's thoughts

in mediaeval Europe is faint compared with a Hindu's despair of his future state if he have no son to perform the rite for him.

There are altogether three Śrāddha: the Impure (with two groups of balls, first six and then ten); the Semi-pure (in which the rice balls are offered in one group of eleven and another of five); and the Pure (in which the balls are offered in three groups of one, fifteen, and four); altogether fifty-two balls are offered.

*Impure Śrāddha (Malina Śoḍaśī).*

The first śrāddha, the Impure Śrāddha (*Malina Śoḍaśī*) is performed whilst the family are still in a condition of sūtaka. It consists of the offering of sixteen balls of rice, i. e. the six which were carried on the dead man's bier and offered to the spirits of various places and to Agni, and the ten which will now on the tenth day be offered to create a different body (*Yātanā Śarīra*) as a cover for the soul, in its little thumb-sized vaporous body, or *Liṅga Śarīra*. The priest and the chief mourner, whom we will take to be the eldest son of the dead man, when they reach a suitable plot of ground at the river-side (which must not be the burning-ground) purify it by sprinkling water over it, and then scatter sesamum seeds and barley on it.

They then seat themselves on two of the low stools which they have brought with them and place a third for Viṣṇu to sit on. (It is interesting to notice that these stools have no nails or screws in them, for that would be fatal to the object of the śrāddha, since cold iron frightens away not only evil but also good spirits, and neither the spirits of the ancestors nor the little thumb-sized vaporous body itself could come near, if there were any iron about.)

Viṣṇu is invoked, asked to take his seat on the stool provided for him, and then represented by a knotted blade of darbha-grass, which is placed on it.

Then the priest says on behalf of the son that the śrāddha is performed to provide a body (*Yātanā Śarīra*) for the father.

A tiny trench is made in the ground running from north-west to south-east and is lined with darbha-grass.

Ten balls of barley flour mixed with sesamum seeds, water, sugar, milk, curds, honey, and clarified butter are arranged in this trench, for they say that, as the body of the dead man was made of dust, the balls must be given to dust, and so they put them on the earth itself. As each ball is placed in the trench, a sentence is repeated; as the ceremonial defilement (*Mṛitaka Sūtaka*) is not yet removed, the holy words of the Vedas cannot be used, but they quote sentences from some treatise on funeral rites.

As the first<sup>1</sup> ball is offered, the priest says, and the son repeats after him: 'May this create a head'; with the second ball: 'May this create neck and shoulders'; with the third: 'May this create heart and chest'; the fourth: 'May this create a back'; the fifth: 'May this create waist and stomach'; the sixth: 'May this create thighs and entrails'; the seventh: 'May this create legs as far as the knees'; the eighth: 'May this create knees'; the ninth: 'May this create legs, shins, and feet'; the tenth: 'May this create power of digesting, and so satisfying hunger and thirst'.

Each ball contains four parts; one part is for Yama, an awful-looking deity; two are for the five elements, which compose the new body (the *Yātanā Śarīra*); and the fourth for its nourishment.

This new body which now encloses the thumb-sized *Linga Śarīra* is about eighteen inches long, the size, that is to say, of the arm from finger tip to elbow joint.

When all the ten balls are laid in the trench, water is sprinkled on them, and a long cotton thread is laid over them to provide clothing for the new body, this thread, too, being sprinkled with water.

A mark is made on each of the balls, but it should be noticed that this mark is made not of rice, which is always

<sup>1</sup> *Contra*. Monier Williams, *Brāhmanism*, p. 293.

auspicious, but of sesamum seeds. The flowers, too, that are laid on the balls are interesting, for they are sesamum flowers,<sup>1</sup> a blossom called *agastya*, and tulasī leaves; no other flowers may be given.

Then comes a ceremony called *Śantāñjali*, when one hundred drops are given to the balls. To perform this rite, water and milk are mixed together in a conch-shell, and drops from it are poured on the balls in the following manner: one drop on the first ball, three on the second, five on the third, seven on the fourth, and so on, till the whole hundred have been dropped.

After this rite has been completed, the son, holding a tulasī leaf, prays silently to Viṣṇu to deliver the dead man 'from being a departed one in the power of Yama'. He then offers the leaf as the symbol of *bhakti* (loving devotion) to the blade of knotted darbha-grass representing Viṣṇu. The grass is unplaited, and each knot untied, and Viṣṇu takes his leave, but the polite formula asking him to come again is not used, as this is not an auspicious occasion. The balls are next picked up from the trench and thrown into the river, the son bathes, and the ceremony closes by gifts of grass being made to cows, of laḍḍu sweets to Brāhmins, and of loaves to dogs.

It will be remembered that the object of this Impure Śrāddha (*Malina Śoḍaśī*) was to provide a body for the disembodied spirit. If this were not done, that spirit (*preta*) would become a malignant spirit (*bhūta*), but if this Śrāddha of the Tenth Day has been successful, the departed now possesses a physical body, subject to hunger and thirst, the length of a forearm (*Yātanā Śarīra*), covering the little thumb-sized vaporous body. This new *Yātanā Śarīra* remains unchanged near its old home, while the Eleventh- and Twelfth-day Śrāddha are offered, and it accepts and eats the offerings. On the thirteenth day it leaves this world and sets out on its twelve months' journey to Yama's kingdom, holding on to

<sup>1</sup> Sesamum flowers can only be offered to dead ancestors (*pitaras*), never to the gods.

the cow's tail to cross the river Vaitaraṇī. This journey is a very terrible one and much worse than the hurried first journey, and, as we shall see later, special śrāddha are performed to help the soul on its way. Here we need only note that at the end of the year it reaches the abode of Yama still in the body (the Yātanā Śarīra) it has received as the result of this Tenth-day Śrāddha. It is this Yātanā Śarīra too which goes before the judgement seat of Yama, who pronounces sentences of heaven or hell according to its accumulated past actions. When its term in either heaven or hell is served, it will have to take another body, *Kāraṇa Śarīra*, and the form of that body will entirely depend again on the accumulated energy of the soul's past actions (*Karma*). It may be that of a worm, a plant, a god, a demon, a cat, or a man, but, unlike what the Jaina believe, whatever body the soul inhabits it inhabits as sole tenant, not as a tenement lodger.

On the tenth day after the completion of the Impure Śrāddha, the sūtaka or ceremonial defilement is lightened. (It is quite ended for distant relatives, but in the immediate family in which the death has occurred it lasts for twelve days.)

The sūtaka is heaviest on the first day of the death before the body is burnt, when the family cannot touch pen or paper. All day long they have to wear funeral dress, and so cannot go to their business. In some parts of India they are not allowed to touch bed or bedding, but in Kāṭhiāwār this is permissible, though all the bedding used during sūtaka is sent to the washerman on the eleventh day.

Similarly they have on the tenth day a great cleansing of all the vessels used during sūtaka, the metal ones being cleaned with ashes and the earthen pots thrown away. (They do not have to purify grindstone or pestle and mortar, for these may not be used till after the tenth day.)

As the rice for the impure funeral offerings was cooked on the hearth, it also is considered impure, so on the tenth day the old hearth is dug up and a new one built and plastered with cow-dung.

The prohibition against hearing music outlasts sūtaḥ : sometimes the mourners decline to hear it till two months have passed, occasionally even for six, if the man who died was quite young.<sup>1</sup>

On the tenth day every member of the family bathes in the house, the men have their moustaches shaved off, the women wash their hair, all the garments that have been worn during sūtaḥ are washed, and the floor and walls of the house are re-plastered with cow-dung. After all this has been done, though some sūtaḥ still remains, outsiders can now touch the mourners and can sit on the same carpet with them, but on the morning of the eleventh day they bathe again, and after that day any defilement that remains is chiefly connected with food.

There is another very important aspect of the defilement that we should notice. The sūtaḥ has not only affected material things, but has rendered the mourners ceremonially impure, and so not only unfit to worship, but also unfit to keep their tutelary god in their house.

On the day of the death some friend of the family, who is himself unaffected by Sūtaḥ, comes to the house to fetch the idol, bareheaded, dressed only in silk loin-cloth and scarf of ceremony, and wearing sandals of wood, not leathern shoes.

This man carries the idol, probably the phallic emblem of Śiva (a liṅga with a silver serpent coiled round it arranged on a tiny silver throne), and before him goes another friend of the family similarly dressed, sprinkling water on the road to purify it before the passage of the god.

On the eleventh day, when the sūtaḥ is lightened, the members of the family can go into the empty room where the god is usually kept, to worship their *Iṣṭa Deva* (tutelary deity); but the idol itself should not be brought back till the twelfth

<sup>1</sup> Recently State mourning was proclaimed in one of the native States in Kāthiāwār, and while every man had to shave his moustache, and no woman was allowed to wear a bright sārī, or to fetch water from the well in a copper or brass vessel for ten days, no music at all was allowed for three months.



day, in the case of relatives; or till the thirteenth day in the house where the man has died.

On the morning of the twelfth or thirteenth day, then, the removal of *sūtaka* is practically completed. The family again bathe early in the morning, and the owner of the house brings back the idol and re-installs it, though food cannot be offered to the idol in the actual house of mourning until after the thirteenth day.

Not only have the mourners been unable during the days of *sūtaka* to worship their idol, but the men of the house have not been allowed to repeat the sacred words of the *Gāyatrī* mantra, or to perform *Sandhyā* in the ordinary form. They have, however, been allowed to perform a shortened and altered form of *Sandhyā*, since a *Brāhman* who omits it altogether for even the space of three days<sup>1</sup> is thrown back to the ranks of a *Śūdra*. But to a devout and spiritually-minded *Brāhman* it is a very real grief to be cut off from the worship of his god and the beloved words of the *Gāyatrī* mantra in the time of his greatest sorrow, just when he most longs for the divine consolation and sympathy. To such a man there is deep attraction in the thought of a God Who is 'a very present help in time of trouble' and Who Himself promises to be with His children when they walk through this valley overcast by the shadow of death.

We have noticed that the ceremonial defilement caused by *sūtaka* presses less heavily as the days go by, the mourners passing through distinct stages from complete defilement to less pollution, then to still less, and at last to complete freedom from *sūtaka*. It has also been noticed that nearness of relationship to the dead man affects the heaviness of the *sūtaka*, only those in the actual house (father's children, or grandfather's) being impure for twelve days, those within the seventh degree of kinship being ceremonially impure for ten days, and outside that, up to the sixteenth degree, for three days.

<sup>1</sup> A *Brāhman* who sold milk for three days would also become a *Śūdra*.

The caste-fellows who go to the burning-ground come home and bathe and are accounted ceremonially pure as soon as evening falls and the lights are lit.

On the eleventh day after the death the son or chief mourner starts out early with the family priest and attendant Brāhmans for the river bank, where they have an enormous amount of worship and purification to go through. Though worshippers of Śiva, they take with them a *Śālagrāma*, the symbol of Viṣṇu, because he is the god who is popularly supposed to preside over Śrāddha ceremonies, and they probably also take some fire from the household hearth.

Before leaving the house they light a lamp of clarified butter and put it either in the private chapel of the house or else in the room where the man died; they then walk barefoot to some suitable place on the river bank not too near to the burning-ground. There the son performs Sandhyā, which he is now once more allowed to do, goes through the whole of a Brāhman's morning worship, and finally does reverence either to the idol in a temple of Śiva, if there be one at hand, or else to some pīpal tree growing near. Other learned Brāhmans, having been invited to attend the Śrāddha, watch whilst the son purifies his body from all sin by performing *Prāyaścitta*. He invokes Viṣṇu and worships him, either under the form of three knotted blades of darbha-grass, or as the *Śālagrāma*, with the full sixteenfold ritual.

He then recites the text which every Brāhman repeats once a year on the day when he changes his sacred thread, and which implores forgiveness for every sin great or small.

The great sins (*Mahāpātaka*) are: killing a Brāhman; drinking wine; theft; intrigue with a guru's wife; and association with any who have committed such sins. Forgiveness for these sins is only asked every year, for, as a Brāhman gentleman quite truly remarked to the present writer: 'One does not kill a Brāhman every day'.

For the smaller sins (*Upapātaka*) forgiveness is asked twice a day. These are: untruthfulness; cheating; refusing to give

alms to the deserving ; eating forbidden things, such as garlic or onions ; smoking ; or doing anything unworthy of a Brāhman in mind, body, or speech.

When the son has thus asked forgiveness, he sips the five products of the cow which confer ceremonial purity, i.e. milk, curds, clarified butter, urine, and cow-dung (*Pañcagavya*), though many Brāhmans nowadays substitute milk, curds, clarified butter, honey, and sugar (*Pañcamṛita*). In either case the milk thus sipped should, if possible, consist of a little of the froth upon a young calf's mouth when she has finished drinking, and a little of the milk she has left undrunk in the cow. The son of the dead man should then bathe about ten times in the river, but if he be delicate, he is allowed to bathe once in the river and to symbolize the remaining nine baths by sprinkling water on his forehead. After bathing, his body is besmeared with the above-mentioned five products of a cow (the *Pañcagavya*) and anointed with five things : first, with water in which gold is kept ; then, with water containing areca-nut ; thirdly, with water in which herbs are soaking ; next, he daubs himself with clay that has been taken from a cow-pen, a stable, or an ant-hill ; lastly, with water containing some darbha-grass. He then bathes again, and after this puts on a fresh loin-cloth which is either newly bought or just washed (his old loin-cloth being given away to a beggar), and now at long last he is regarded as ceremonially pure, outwardly and inwardly free from *sūtaka*, and so free to perform 'occasional' religious rites. There is one interesting point that should be noticed about the new loin-cloth : it must have no stitches on it, nor may the shawl-like dress (*sāri*) that the women wear on a Śrāddha day have any stitches. Similarly, on a Śrāddha day no relative, male or female, is allowed to sew, lest any sewing or stitching on that day should sew up the throat of the new body that is being created for the dead man, and so he might never be able to drink water again.

The son of the dead man next besmears his forehead, chest,

throat, shoulders, and arms with ashes, knots up his long lock of hair which had been left untied, and sips water three times.

He is now ceremonially pure, and so may repeat the Vedic mantras.

The Śālagrāma, the symbol of Viṣṇu, is put on a stool, and after performing *Prāṇāyāma*, the inhaling and expiring of breath in a prescribed way, he worships it with the sixteenfold worship, repeating as he does so the mantras appropriate to the occasion (the *Puruṣasūkta* mantras).

This is followed by the worship of Satyeśa. A white cloth is spread on a low stool, and on this cloth an eight-petalled lotus-flower set in a sort of square is outlined in rice. In the centre of this flower design they place a new copper or earthen vessel filled with water, in which a collection of things has been dropped, consisting of white and red powder, flowers, five different kinds of leaves, areca-nut, and pice. On the top of this vessel another smaller one of the same metal is placed, filled either with water or rice, but preferably with rice. Resting on this upper vessel is a gold image of Kṛiṣṇa. His eight chief wives<sup>1</sup> are represented, if possible, by a gold image of each placed in each of the eight petals of the lotus. (If a gold image cannot be afforded, an areca-nut is put in each of the eight petals.) The gold images, having recently come from the fire at the goldsmith's, contain no god until certain mantras (the *Vahnnyuttāraṇa*) are repeated over them. They are then bathed in ten ways very much as described in the purification of the son, excepting that a bath of ashes is substituted for the bathing with water containing herbs. They are next breathed on, and their eyes are opened. When the god has been installed in each of them in this shortened<sup>2</sup> form, they are worshipped with the usual sixteenfold ritual. The son then circumambulates them (with his right hand to

<sup>1</sup> Rukmiṇī, Jambuvatī, Satyā, Nagnajitī, Kālindī, Bhadrā, Mitra-Vindā, Satyabhāmā.

<sup>2</sup> For full form see below, pp. 409 ff.

the god) four times, whilst the priest prays that the preta may be delivered from its disembodied state<sup>1</sup> and that its sins may be removed.

A sacrifice (*Prāyaścitta Homa*) is then performed for the purification of the *preta* from any of the thirty-two ritual sins that the dead man may have committed whilst dying, such as accidentally touching an unclean thing at the time of death, dying on a bedstead, not being shaved or not being bathed before death. For this sacrifice a special type of altar is built<sup>2</sup> of raised clay. To purify it, the raised altar is swept three times with blades of darbha-grass, and then a little cow-dung is plastered over it, and a hollow is scooped out in it with a wooden spoon, the dust this creates being swept away in a special manner by the joined thumb and third finger<sup>3</sup> of the right hand; for when the fingers are thus arranged, they remove demons. (It is for this reason that, when cow-urine is sprinkled, it is always done by the third finger snapping against the thumb.)

The altar is then further purified by being sprinkled with water. The fire which they have brought with them from the house, or which they have lit immediately on arrival at the river bank, and which has witnessed all the ceremonies, is now placed by the officiating priest (the *Ācārya*) on the altar. This fire is called *Aditi* and is considered to be the mother of all the gods. At the south of the altar another Brāhman is now seated. He represents the god Brahmā, and he supervises the ceremony and prompts the performer. If in some remote village no learned Brāhman is available, the god Brahmā is represented by fifty blades of darbha-grass placed on a stool to the south of the altar. When this prompter says that the

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered, that according to one belief the spirit has by now obtained a *Yātana Śarīra*. Differing opinions are, of course, held.

<sup>2</sup> This built-up altar is called a *Sthanḍila*, as opposed to a hollowed-out altar (*Kuṇḍa*).

<sup>3</sup> The third finger is sacred to Viṣṇu; the thumb represents a Brāhman, so a *cāṇḍalo* is always made with the thumb on the forehead; the second finger shows a quarrel; the fourth points the way.

right moment has arrived, the officiating priest, who is seated to the north of the altar, welcomes the fire by pouring some water into a pot (called the *pranītā pātra*).

A rather elaborate rite with darbha-grass is next performed. The officiating Brāhman (the Ācārya) takes in his hand a root bearing three blades of darbha-grass and plucks out the middle blade of the three, which he throws away to the north. He then takes three other loose blades of grass and lays them across the two still left on the root. Next, he cuts these two off from the root and puts them into the water-pot, throwing the three loose ones to the north as an offering to the gods and saints who dwell in that direction. Then with his right hand he fills a smaller water-pot three times from the bigger pot, and transfers it from where it was on the ground at his right hand to the ground at his left. All this takes about five minutes, and when it is completed, he purifies the other pots that are to be used during the ceremony by sprinkling water on them with two pieces of cut darbha-grass, which he takes out of the big water-pot.

The rice and clarified butter are next prepared. The rice is washed three times and put to cook<sup>1</sup> in a pot over the fire. (This pot should be of copper, and if so, after the ceremony is over, it will be given to the priest; if it be earthen, however, it will be thrown away.) The Brāhman representing Brahmā then puts the butter to warm on the fire. When both the rice and butter are ready, offerings are made to the fire. First three pieces of a particular kind of wood called *palāśa* are thrown into the flames. Water is poured round it, and clarified butter is poured into it from a wooden spoon. Rice, clarified butter, and sugar are mixed together, taken between the thumb and the tips of the second and third fingers<sup>2</sup> and dropped into the fire. Following this, one thousand offerings of sesamum seeds mixed with several things, such as butter,

<sup>1</sup> In a Śrāddha of Kaṇabīs that the writer watched, instead of rice, wheat was used and mixed uncooked with the five nectars. The out-castes, however, use cooked rice and treacle.

<sup>2</sup> This position of the fingers is called *Mṛigī mudrā*.

sugar, scented leaves, scented grass, and incense are made to the fire, whilst the appropriate verse (*Viṣṇu mantra*) is recited by the priest.

To conclude the sacrifice, a coco-nut is put in the fire, and, to ensure its being completely consumed, clarified butter is poured on the flames, which blaze up brightly. By this last offering of clarified butter the god Rudra in his terrible form is propitiated. The sacrifice for the ritual sins of the dead man's last moments (*Prāyaścitta Homa*) is now completed, and the son bathes, putting herbs on his head. This done, he changes his sacred thread (for the old one has become unholy), hanging the new one over the left shoulder in the usual auspicious way.

This changing of the sacred thread<sup>1</sup> marks a further stage in the passage back to complete ceremonial purity after the death defilement.

(The last stage will be passed when the Śrāddha of Union on the twelfth day is completed; and, after that night is passed, even the food in the house of mourning will be pure and can be offered to the god.)

Now the Śālagrāma is again worshipped in the sixteenfold way, and Viṣṇu is asked to take up his abode in the sixteen parts of the worshipper's body.

Five gods are now worshipped:<sup>2</sup> Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Yama, and Tatpuruṣa. To represent them, they take a silver image for Brahmā,<sup>3</sup> a gold one for Viṣṇu, a copper one for Rudra, iron for Yama, and lead for Tatpuruṣa, purify them, and then bathe them ten times.

Five Brāhmans are now asked to pray, each praying separately to one of the gods and using a mantra taken from the *Śukla Yajur-veda Sāṃhitā*.

Each image is placed on a metal vessel, and in front of

<sup>1</sup> The thread has to be changed and the old one thrown away after any defilement has been contracted by doing such things as riding a donkey or a camel, going on board a ship, or coming out of prison.

<sup>2</sup> *Pañca deva sthāpanā*.

<sup>3</sup> The worship of Brahmā is rare enough to be noticed.

each god his own special grain is arranged on the correctly coloured cloth. Thus rice is placed on white<sup>1</sup> cloth in front of Brahmā, green pulse is put on green cloth for Viṣṇu, wheat on red cloth for Rudra, black pulse on black cloth for Yama, and sesamum seeds on yellow cloth for the Tatpuruṣa.

Next, a long piece of white cloth is taken, and seven knots are made in it; inside the first five knots are tied these five different kinds of grain, split grain is tied in one of the remaining knots, and a grain like black mustard in the other. This piece of knotted cloth is stretched in front of the five gods, and when all is arranged, two special verses are recited as a prayer to the five gods, first asking them to be present, and then asking them to deliver the preta of the dead man from its disembodied state.

### *Semi-pure (Ekādaśa) Śrāddha.*

As we have seen the mourners pass through various stages, from complete defilement to complete ceremonial purity, so the various Śrāddha are looked on, first as impure, then as semi-pure, and at last are considered to be quite pure. But of course, even when the offering is pure, it is always inauspicious, and should therefore be performed as quickly as possible.

To perform the Ekādaśa (the Semi-pure) Śrāddha on the eleventh day, first of all eleven tiny bundles of darbha-grass, each of which contains three blades, are taken, and one knot is tied in each bundle to represent eleven gods. These are now invoked; amongst them are: *Somarāja*, *Havyavāha* (the carrier of offerings to the gods), *Kavyavāha* (the carrier of offerings to ancestors), *Kāla* (time under the aspect of the destroyer), *Rudra* (Śiva in his terrible form), *Puruṣa* (the divinity living in any man), and *Viṣṇu*.

<sup>1</sup> These colours are those which a Yogī in meditation (*Samādhi*) would see representing each different god.



Each bundle of grass is then bathed in water containing barley and sesamum seed, which is poured out of a conch-shell.

The son puts a ring of darbha-grass round the third finger of his right hand and worships the gods in the five-fold way.

Meanwhile eleven balls of rice (*pinḍa*) have been prepared by some ceremonially pure person, probably either the son or the officiating priest; this time the rice is only washed once, for the Śrāddha must be performed as quickly as possible; but, as before, the rice is mixed with eight things and moulded into the shape of tennis-balls.

The ground is first purified by having barley and sesamum seeds scattered over it (which makes it as holy as the land of Gayā in Bengal), and then the balls are placed in a row in front of eleven bundles of darbha-grass, and as each ball is put down, the name of the particular one of the eleven gods to which it is offered is pronounced.

When all eleven have been arranged, worship is done to them in the following way: water is poured on them, a cotton thread is arranged over them all, a mark is made on them (white in colour, not the auspicious red), and tulasī leaves are offered; rice is not offered, but in its place sesamum seeds are given, and then areca-nut, and finally incense and lamp-worship are offered.

A conch-shell is next filled with milk and water, and its contents poured on the eleven balls. As this is done, a mantra from the Yajur-veda is recited, asking that the thirst of the dead man's (Mr. So-and-so's) disembodied spirit (*preta*) may be assuaged. As the actual name of the dead man is mentioned, the officiant changes his sacred thread, and similarly all Brāhmins present change their sacred threads from the left shoulder to the right; as soon as they mention the name of a god, it is changed back to the left. (A Brāhman<sup>1</sup> who

<sup>1</sup> In each family only the oldest member need perform the daily śrāddha for the dead ancestors.

performs Śrāddha, or rather *Tarpaṇa*, every day for his dead ancestors always changes the sacred thread each time he mentions their names.)<sup>1</sup> The ceremony ends by the eleven balls being put into a broad copper vessel and then thrown into the river, or if there is no river near, they are given to a cow to eat.

The knots in the darbha-grass are untied, which sets the gods free to go, and directly they have left, the blades of grass are thrown into the river, and this is also done with the ring of darbha-grass, which the performer had put on at the beginning of the rite. He now bathes, putting herbs on his head as he does so, and afterwards puts on a new loin-cloth and besmears his forehead with ashes.

But his work is not yet finished, for though he has offered the Ekādaśa Śrāddha, he must now perform the Fivefold Śrāddha (Pañca Śrāddha), and these two together are thought of as composing a sixteenfold Semi-pure Śrāddha, corresponding to the sixteenfold Impure Śrāddha which we have already studied. (Altogether, we may remember, fifty-two balls of rice have to be offered in Śrāddha.)

The officiant therefore now takes five bundles of darbha-grass, each containing three blades, and knots each bundle to represent the five gods: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Yama, and Tatpuruṣa. These he arranges so that they face the north, each bundle resting on another.

He worships the grass in the fivefold way, and then arranges five balls of the cooked rice mixed with seven<sup>2</sup> special things (sesamum seeds, water, sugar, milk, curds, honey, clarified butter) in a row. The row runs from east to west, and each ball in it rests on a bundle of darbha-grass on which water has been sprinkled. As soon as the balls are arranged, water is

<sup>1</sup> With regard to mentioning the name of the dead, there does not seem to be any special rule. The dead man's mother is generally too heart-broken at his loss ever to be able to introduce his name casually into conversation, but other members of the family mention the name if there is any occasion.

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking these are regarded as eight things, the cooking being thought of as an added ingredient.

sprinkled on them too, from a conch-shell. If the chief mourner can afford it, a loin-cloth (with a red or a plain border, but not an indigo one) is placed on each ball, if not, one long white cotton thread is laid along them all. Sometimes, instead of a loin-cloth, a rich man places a rupec on each ball; in either case the money or the cloth goes to the family priest or his deputy who is performing the Śrāddha. Water is then again poured from the conch-shell, and the fivefold worship is offered to the balls, sesamum seeds being substituted for rice when the *Naivedya* is offered to the balls, and five copper coins being also given to each ball. The priest then recites two different mantras, praying that the dead man's spirit (preta) may be delivered from its disembodied state. The balls and the rice that was placed on them are thrown into a river, and, as before, the bundles of darbha-grass are unknotted, and they and the performer's grass ring are also flung into the stream.

The son again bathes with five herbs on his head, puts on a fresh and absolutely new unwashed and untouched loin-cloth, and wraps a smaller one round his shoulders. (These, being pure, will afterwards be given to the priest.) He again smears his forehead and ties his top-knot, and then comes back pure to the place of the Śrāddha, where, the Semi-pure Śrāddha being finished, he is now ready to perform the Pure Śrāddha which follows.

It is important to remember that during all these ceremonies no iron may be brought near the place. We saw that the stools had no screws, and the performer is also careful to see that no one has anything like an iron key on his person, for that too would frighten the spirits of ancestors (*pitṛis*) away.

#### *Pure Śrāddha (Uttama Śoḍaśī).*

Still on this crowded eleventh day, and following the Semi-pure Śrāddha, comes the Pure Śrāddha; but before it can be begun, the son of the dead man must marry a male to a female calf. Two calves, each about a year old, ought to be married,

but if it is altogether beyond his means to afford real live animals, they may be represented<sup>1</sup> by two bundles of darbha-grass, each with a *minḍhalā* nut tied in it. If it be quite impossible for any reason to go through the ceremony of marrying the calves or the grass now, it must not be entirely omitted, but should be performed at the time of the yearly Śrāddha.

If, however, the marriage is carried out in the proper way and at the proper time, a square altar (*Vedī*) is made in the centre of a plastered square of ground, each side of the altar being about a cubit in length and four inches high. At each corner of the plastered square four earthen pots are placed.

A stool is put in the north-east corner of this square of ground, and over it a red piece of cloth is spread. Wheat grains are arranged on this cloth in the design of a four-petalled lotus-flower, five copper vessels being placed on this flower design, one on each petal, and one in the centre of the lotus.

A coco-nut is laid on each vessel, and then five different goddesses are invoked and invited to be present.<sup>2</sup> If the family of the dead man can afford it, five cloths are offered to the goddesses, but the cost of the death and funeral ceremonies may already have been so heavy that only one cloth can be offered, and even if that be too expensive, they quote the pretty Indian proverb: 'If you cannot give a whole flower, give the petal', and wrap a separate white cotton thread round each vessel and coco-nut to symbolize the giving of cloth.

The performer then throws white and red powder on the coco-nut, marks it with a white and also with an auspicious red mark, and offers coloured flowers to it.

Fire is brought and put into another, but smaller, altar, which adjoins the *Vedī* altar. This little altar is purified

<sup>1</sup> The calves were so represented when the writer watched this Śrāddha.

<sup>2</sup> Nandā, Sumanasā, Gaurī, Surabhī, and Bhadrā.

with the same ceremonies that we saw used to purify the bigger altar in the *Prāyaścitta Homa*, but now an earthen pot is brought and placed to the north of the small altar. This pot is divided<sup>1</sup> into two by an interior barrier made of unbaked dough, water being placed in one division of the pot and milk in another. Some more unbaked dough is taken and put on the fire to bake till it is partially cooked, and some rice, milk, and sugar are also put in a smaller pot on the fire to cook.

When the rice is cooked, the god Rudra is invoked and invited to come and live in the fire, and the rice is thrown into the fire in handfuls eleven times as an offering to him.

Pūṣan, the toothless god,<sup>2</sup> a form of one of the twelve suns, is invoked and invited to take up his abode in the fire, and half of the partially cooked dough is soaked in clarified butter and given to him, whilst the rest of the dough and anything that is left of the rice is offered to the fire itself as *Agni*.

This done, the two calves are led round the fire four times, or else the bundles of grass representing them are carried round it four times. The animals are then placed so as to face the east, and their tails are held together. The ends of their tails are next dipped into a shallow dish filled with water, and whilst this is being done, mantras are recited, praying that the preta may be raised from his present state to a higher one.

The male calf is now untied and turned loose in the jungle, but before he goes, the divided pot (in which the milk represented the water of the Ganges and the water the river Jamnā) is given to him to drink from, and green grass is given him to eat, and he is asked to help the preta in crossing the river Vaitaraṇī, and also to be a witness at the court

<sup>1</sup> This, like all similar divisions, is called *Gangā-Jamnā*.

<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that Pūṣan was the mannerless god who laughed when the goddess Satī threw herself into the fire to avenge the insult done to her husband, and it was for this reason that Śiva knocked his teeth out.

of Yama that the funeral ceremonies have been properly performed.

The male calf is also marked with a wheel on his left thigh and a trident on the right (at first these marks are made in red powder, but later on they are branded), and any one trying to take a calf with such markings for his own use will assuredly go to hell. The female calf is given to a Brāhman.

The chief mourner bathes and dons a new untouched cloth ready to perform the Ekoddiṣṭa Śrāddha,<sup>1</sup> the first of the three parts of the Pure Śrāddha.

The condition of the preta has been steadily improving. The Impure Śrāddha provided the disembodied spirit with a body, the Semi-pure Śrāddha raised him from the lowest stage in which a preta could be to a gradually improving one, and now we are to study the Śrāddha that will help him to become a pitṛi instead of a preta. Hitherto the Śrāddha have consisted of offerings to several gods (sometimes four in number, sometimes eleven, sometimes five, besides that to the spirit of the dead man), but on this occasion, only one ball will be offered, and that solely to the dead man's spirit.

In the old days this Śrāddha used to be performed at the end of a year, now it is commenced on the eleventh day after the death, and completed on the twelfth.

It is extremely important, for if it be not correctly performed, the dead man's spirit will remain a preta and never become a pitṛi.

At the beginning of the rite Viṣṇu is worshipped under the form of a Śalagrāma in the fivefold way, and to do this the performer of the Śrāddha faces east, or sometimes north.

Next a bundle of three blades of darbha-grass is knotted and placed to the south to represent a pitṛi, and turning towards the south, the performer worships it, invoking the pitṛi by throwing sesamum seeds on the blades of grass.

A ball of rice has then to be offered. To offer this piṇḍa to the pitṛi, the performer, wearing his sacred thread over his

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes called the Ādya Śrāddha.

right shoulder and bending his left knee, takes the ball in his hand and presents it with the thumb inclined towards the ground. Afterwards he places it on some other darbha-grass, which has been sprinkled with water. Then a white mark is made on the ball, and certain flowers and leaves are placed on it. Now there are six <sup>1</sup> things that the pitṛis love, but of these six the leaves of the tulasī plant and the flowers and seeds of the sesamum plant are the dearest of all; so that, if possible, the whole six, or at least three, should be placed on the ball.

A thread to represent clothes is next laid on it, and the performer prays that the gift of this ball may assuage the hunger of the preta; and then, as he goes on to ask that its thirst may be quenched, he pours water on the ball with his thumb earthwards.

If, owing to any circumstances, the eight gifts <sup>2</sup> usually made at the time of a man's death were not given, they are promised now, and distributed on the thirteenth day. It will be remembered that, before the two calves were married, five copper vessels were arranged on a lotus; these are now given away to Brāhmans, the ball is thrown into the river, and the performer bathes.

Now that everybody is pure, and the ceremonial defilement caused by the death has been removed, people can be asked to dine in the house once more, and feasts are given on the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth days. (Food is pure enough for mortals on the eleventh day, but not for gods till the Rite of Union is performed.) At least fifty-two Brāhmans must be invited, to correspond with the fifty-two balls offered in Śrāddha. And it is essential that they should come, otherwise the preta will not be delivered, for what a Brāhman eats has, as it were, a sacrificial value, for it is accounted as given to Agni. The near relatives and the members of the household

<sup>1</sup> The other three, besides these mentioned, are the *Agastya*, the *Bhrīngarāja*, and the *Salapatrikā*.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 140, 141.

also come, but no one else is very anxious to do so, for it is not a very auspicious occasion. If the dead man had lived to a good old age, outside guests might come, for such a death is not so very unlucky; but after the death of a young man it is difficult to get even children to attend the funeral feast, and, except the fifty-two Brāhmans, none but children would think of coming.

It is considered fitting that the dead man's daughter or her sons bear the expense of the feast on the eleventh day, the next-of-kin, whether son or father, providing those on the twelfth and thirteenth days.

On the twelfth day the son of the dead man and all the Brāhmans go again to the same spot on the river bank to perform a most interesting rite, the object of which is to provide the spirit, which has now changed from a *preta* into a *pitri*, with fifteen resting-places on his twelve-month journey to the land of Yama.

Fifteen bundles of darbha-grass are placed on the special screwless stool, and the *pitṛis* are invoked. (The names of those invoked differ according to the time of the year.)

Fifteen balls of rice are placed in front of the bundles of grass, each ball being offered to provide food for the spirit at the various rest-houses which he reaches at the close of different periods of time. The first is offered to provide food at the rest-house he will reach at the end of the first month, the month, of course, being counted from the time of the man's death. The second ball is for the spirit to receive at the end of a month and a half (i. e. at the end of the third fortnight after the death). The third ball is provided for the end of the second month; the fourth for the end of the third month; the fifth for the end of the fourth month, and the sixth for the end of the fifth; the seventh ball, however, is provided for the close of the fifth month and a half after the death; the eighth ball for the end of the sixth month; the ninth for the end of the seventh month; the tenth for the end of the eighth month; the eleventh for the end of the ninth month; the twelfth for



the end of the tenth month ; the thirteenth for the end of the eleventh month. Then the fourteenth is provided for the end of the eleventh month and a half, and finally the fifteenth ball for the end of the twelfth month.

If, however, there should be an extra month in that particular year, an extra bundle of darbha-grass and an extra ball of rice are provided, for the poor soul's journey will be lengthened if he has been so unfortunate as to die in a year that has thirteen months. Anyhow, the journey will be terrible enough, and so the balls are offered to provide the spirit with water and clothing, as well as food, at the resting-places on its way. It will be remembered that immediately after death the soul went to the court of Yama, on a hasty journey for inspection, when its Liṅga Śarīra was only the size of a thumb, and could move with great speed, but could not experience pain. Now, however, the soul possesses a Yātanā Śarīra the size of a cubit, which can and does suffer on the journey.

At first it seems strange that there should be two journeys to Yama's kingdom, the one immediately after death, and this other twelve-month-long journey ; but the reason is this : sometimes a mistake is made, and the wrong person taken to Yama's court.

When a person is unconscious for a long time, but ultimately recovers, his friends know that he has made the quick journey to Yamā, and has been sent back again.

Once upon a time a very embarrassing mistake was made by burning a body too soon. The soul of a Jaina lady called Jāna was taken by mistake for a Muḥammadan lady of the same name. When Yama saw the Jaina lady, he at once realized the blunder and, sending her back to earth, summoned the Muḥammadan lady. But when the poor spirit of the Jaina Jāna came back home, she found that her body had been already burnt, and so there was nothing for her to do but to enter the body of the Muḥammadan lady, the other Jāna, whose spirit by now had started for Yama's court.

Unfortunately there is a great difference between Muḥammadan and Jaina etiquette, and difficulties arose at once, the modest Jaina spirit refusing to take her body into a Muḥammadan house, and expressing her horror at meat-eating. This enraged the Muḥammadan Jāna's sons, who drove her forth from their compound, whilst the Jaina friends absolutely refused to receive a Muḥammadan lady who said she was inhabited by their dead relative's spirit. So till her real death the poor woman passed a miserable existence, living on alms.

A more famous case was that of the first Śaṅkarācārya, who deliberately left his body in a cave and sent his spirit into the body of a dead king which was lying awaiting cremation, in order to find out how kings lived and moved. At first every one thought that the king had only been in a swoon which they had mistaken for death, but the re-animated king was so much cleverer than he had formerly been, that the Prime Minister suspected something and ordered that all bodies lying in trances and all corpses should at once be burnt; and so Śaṅkarācārya had to hurry back to his first body.

Another ceremony, the *Samyojana Śrāddha*, is performed on the twelfth day. It is in some respects the most important of all the Śrāddha, for, if it be successfully accomplished, it unites the pitṛi with his other ancestors, and so ensures his being not a wandering ghost, but a pitṛi in full standing.

Strictly speaking, it should be performed at the end of twelve months from the death, but as there is no certainty in these evil days of the *Kaliyuga* that a man's son will be alive at the year's end, it is now allowed by the religious books to be performed on the twelfth day, in order that, whatever befall later on, there may be no chance of its being omitted.

So effectual is this Śrāddha, that, if it has been satisfactorily performed, the fortnightly, monthly, and subsequent Śrāddhas may be omitted. (Though, in any case, on those days it is well to give a Brāhman an earthen pot containing water,

a handful of rice, and a pice inside it, and with a sweetmeat on its mouth; and at the same time the Brāhman should either be fed, or given the materials for his food.)

The Saṃyojana Śrāddha can be performed either at home or on the river bank. In any case the invitation to the Brāhmins who, as we shall see later, are to represent the *pitṛi*, must be given the evening before, in order that during the night the spirits of the *pitṛi* may actually enter them, and so they may represent these *pitṛi* really, and not in name only.

On the twelfth day the ceremony begins with the worship of Viṣṇu under the form of a Śālagrāma in the sixteen ways. Five or six Brāhmins are then feasted on the finest food. If the dead man had himself been a Brāhman, these must include his son-in-law, or his daughter's son.

All these Brāhmins are chosen with the most meticulous care for this, the most important of all the Śrāddha: they must be without any physical defects, and as perfect in body as the law of Manu demands, and amongst their number neither an astrologer, nor a native physician may be included.

Three of these Brāhmins represent three *pitṛi*, and two of them represent two of the Viśvedevāḥ<sup>1</sup> named Kāla and Kāma. One other Brāhman might be invited to represent the *preta*, but he would be almost certain to decline to do anything so inauspicious and such as would afterwards entail such elaborate and endless purifications. So, in default of a Brāhman, the *preta* is generally represented by a knotted bundle of darbha-grass.

Viṣṇu (under the form of a Śālagrāma) is placed so as to face the west, and he is considered as watching over all the ceremony.

The two Brāhmins representing the Viśvedevāḥ face the east, and so does the performer of the Śrāddha, whilst the *pitṛi* face the north.

<sup>1</sup> There are altogether thirteen Viśvedevāḥ, different ones being summoned for different ceremonies.

The performer takes barley in his hand and, after welcoming the *Viśvedevāḥ* by throwing grains of it towards them, seats them and asks them to help in the performance of the *Śrāddha* and to keep their minds pure and quiet during the ceremony.

He then welcomes the *pitṛi*, changing, as he does so, his thread from his left to his right shoulder. (It should be noticed that the *Brāhmans* representing the *pitṛi* themselves do not change their threads, but wear them over the auspicious left shoulder throughout the rite.) The performer throws *sesamum* seeds towards the *pitṛi*, as he welcomes them, and asks them to keep their minds quiet and pure, and he then promises that he himself will try and keep his own mind free from worldly thoughts.

As soon as the *Viśvedevāḥ* and *pitṛi* are seated and welcomed, the performer of the *Śrāddha* washes each of their right big toes with pure water, and puts white paste made of sandal-wood, and some flowers, on each washed and worshipped big toe. This done, he washes his hands and marks their foreheads with the same white paste. Each *Brāhmaṇ* is then presented with a new loin-cloth of cotton and another of silk and several brass vessels.

The bundle of grass representing the *preta* is welcomed with *sesamum* seed and worshipped in the same way with water, sandal-wood paste, and flowers. Next, the three *pitṛi* are named: they usually represent the father (Mr. So-and-so), grandfather (Mr. . . .), and great-grandfather (Mr. . . .) of the dead man; but if it were a young man who had died, and his father were still living, the *pitṛi* would represent the grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather.

In the same way, if the *Śrāddha* is being performed for a married woman, the *pitṛi* represent her mother-in-law, grandmother-in-law, and great-grandmother-in-law.

In front of the two *Brāhmans* who represent the *Viśvedevāḥ* they arrange on a leaf-plate marked with a white mark some flowers or *tulasī* leaves, a ring of *darbha*-grass, and some barley

grains, and close to the leaf-plate a copper spoon holding water.

The same things are arranged before the three Brāhmins representing the pitṛi, and before the darbha-grass representing the preta, excepting that in both cases sesamum seeds are substituted for the barley.

The performer next takes up the spoon holding water, which was in front of the preta, and pours one-third of its contents on the ground in front of the pitṛi Brāhman who represents the father, one-third in front of the Brāhman representing the pitṛi of the grandfather, and the remainder in front of the Brāhman who represents the great-grandfather.

No water is poured in front of the Brāhmins representing the Viśvedevāḥ, but later on they will be given the spoons that had been laid in front of them, and similarly the three pitṛi Brāhmins will take away their own spoons.

The performer himself brings hot cooked rice from his own house (for the pitṛi always enjoy hot cooked food) and puts it first on the plates of the pitṛi, then on those of the Viśvedevāḥ, and lastly on the plate of the preta.

All the food put on to the preta's plate is so inauspicious that it will either be thrown into a river, or given to cows. (It is safest and wisest to give it to a cow.) The pitṛi, however, and Viśvedevāḥ Brāhmins will eat and enjoy what is put before them, and, indeed, it is a very holy and a very sumptuous meal that they are given, for the performer goes on to bring sweetmeats, and curry, and vegetables, *bhājīyās* and *purīs*, and all sorts of nice things that are eaten with curry. But whatever else he gives or does not give, honey, clarified butter, and sugar must be included in the feast. The performer then repeats the mantra, saying: 'I pour water round this dish containing my food, since I look on food as Brahman and water as truth'; and as he says it, he sprinkles a little over the food placed in front of each Brāhman, and in order to give them a pressing invitation to dine, he takes each visitor's hand by the thumb and puts it on his particular leaf-plate.

Then all dine solemnly, speechlessly, and satisfactorily. Their host asks them at the end of the meal if they have really satisfied their hunger ; and, if they cannot be pressed to take any more, he pours a little water into the cavity of each of their right hands.

After the feast comes the great moment when the preta is really united to the pitṛi.

To prepare for it, cooked rice is again brought, and this is mixed with the eight special things mentioned before, and then divided into two portions. From one portion three balls are made, and from the other portion one large ball. (It is important to notice that these four balls complete the fifty-two balls (*piṇḍa*) that are offered after a death.)

Three of these balls are given to the three pitṛi, each name being recited as the ball is deposited on a blade of darbha-grass in front of his place, and the fourth and biggest ball is given to the preta, his name also being mentioned. Each of the four balls is, like the rest of the fifty-two, slightly oval, not round, in shape.

They are then worshipped with water, sandal-wood marking, flowers, and sesamum seed, and a long cotton thread, long enough to cover all four, is spread over them.

Now all is ready for the great moment, so the performer of the Śrāddha, who, it must never be forgotten, should be the son of the dead man, says : ' I will now effect the union of the preta with my ancestors in the presence of Viṣṇu and these Brāhmans '. So saying, he picks up a thin gold wire and, bending it, cuts with it the big ball (*piṇḍa*) that represented the preta into three parts, repeating, as he cuts it, the name of Rāma or Kṛiṣṇa. Then he takes these three bits of the preta's *piṇḍa* and unites one part with the *piṇḍa* of the father, another with that of the grandfather, and the third with that of the great-grandfather, and afterwards arranges the long cotton thread so that it stretches over these three enlarged balls.

Many members of the other Twice-born castes follow an

even more striking ritual. They believe that the three divisions into which the ball (piṇḍa) of the preta is divided represent an actual division of that preta into three parts: the head, which is subsequently joined to the piṇḍa of the father, the heart, which is joined to that of the grandfather, and the feet which are joined to the piṇḍa of the great-grandfather. So strongly do they feel that the 'body' of the preta itself is cut, that they will not do the cutting themselves, but call in a man of a special caste known as a cutter (Kāṭaliyā) and pay him two or three rupees for performing his dire office; but once it is performed, they dismiss him, and the performer of the Śrāddha, the chief mourner, will not even look at him, either then or ever.

Whatever method, however, is adopted to cut the piṇḍa of the preta, the chief mourner himself unites it with the piṇḍas of the ancestors, taking the most punctilious care as to the way in which these three portions of the fourth ball are rubbed and united with each ancestor's ball.

If the slightest crack or division between the original piṇḍa and the addition from the preta's piṇḍa could be detected, the union of the preta with the pitṛi would not be perfect, so the performer rubs and kneads and welds the new and the old portions into an absolutely homogeneous mass, still oval in shape.

These three enlarged balls are then worshipped with water, sandal-wood paste, flowers, and tulasī leaves.

When all this is completed, the performer of the Śrāddha promises to give to Brāhmins beds, pots, clothing, shoes, a cow, and different kinds of fruits, in order that the departed spirit may have the use of all these things in the next life.

But, besides promising these, he then and there gives three things to Brāhmins. First, he takes a bronze pot filled with hot clarified butter, looks steadily into it till he has seen the reflection of his own face, and then hands it over to a Brāhman; next, he takes another bronze pot, filled this time with cold coagulated clarified butter, into which he sticks some

silver coins, and gives that too to the Brāhman; and, lastly, he gives them a copper pot filled with sesamum seeds, and also containing a few pice.

The ceremony is now finished, so forgiveness is asked from the Śālagrāma for any mistake or omission that may have been made during the long and elaborate ritual, and Viṣṇu is worshipped with the sixteenfold worship and dismissed with three bows.

The three balls representing the pitṛi have still to be got rid of, so the performer picks up the middle ball of the three, smells it,<sup>1</sup> puts it on his right shoulder, and then places it and the two other balls in a copper vessel, and eventually either throws them into a river or gives them to a cow.

He next picks up the leaf-plates and unties the knots in the darbha-grass.

Finally, the performer of the Śrāddha turns to the family priest and asks him if all has been correctly carried out. If the family priest says 'Yes', the ceremony is looked on as completed, the spirit of the dead is known to be united with his other dead ancestors, and the exhausted performer bathes.

And now at long last the final trace of the ceremonial defilement, which we have watched growing fainter and fainter, is removed, and food can be offered to the gods.

Every Hindu, from the highest Brāhman to the lowest Sweeper, makes offerings to crows after a death. The ritual, of course, differs, but most Hindus offer the food to crows after the completion of the Rite of Union.

They bathe, and then cook a sort of rice pudding with milk, and offer any laḍḍu and any bread or sweets (but not vegetables) there may be in the house.

The performer of the Śrāddha then bathes and worships the tulasī plant and lights a lamp of clarified butter in front of it. Taking a piece of coco-nut, he lights that also, and in it burns in front of the plant a tiny bit of each sort of food.

<sup>1</sup> The popular belief is that by smelling it the performer of the Śrāddha will obtain a son.



Then he throws a good-sized portion of each sort of food on to the roof of the house, calling, as he does so, to the crows to come and eat it. If the crows do not come, the performer turns anxiously to the tulasī plant and asks forgiveness for any fault he has committed, and then throws fresh food on to the roof, calling again to the crows.

When the crows have eaten all the food, he throws water on to the roof, and then distributes some of the other food in the house to Brāhmanas and to children, before sitting down himself to dine on it with the other members of the household.

It is only when they see the crows devouring the food that has been thrown on to the roof that the women of the house feel sure that the spirit of the dead man is happy; and it is often pathetic to hear the way the women call over and over again to the birds, beseeching them to come and eat, for it is only through these birds (the chief scavengers of India) that the broken-hearted mother or widow can gain any assurance that their lost loved one is not still wandering forlorn in outer darkness and misery.

On the thirteenth day the courtyard of the house is freshly plastered with cow-dung, and there, to remove the bad effect of the inauspicious ceremonies which were performed on the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth days after death, an auspicious ceremony is carried through.

The son of the dead man bathes and, clothing himself in a pure loin-cloth, sits on a stool facing the east, the family priest seating himself beside him.

A special design like a conventional lotus is made on the ground, in the centre of which is placed a pot filled with water, and on the top of this pot there is a flat dish holding a sweetmeat (*laddu*) made of wheat flour, clarified butter, and treacle.

Thirteen goddesses are invoked, the chiefest of whom is Lalitā; these are represented by thirteen red marks made on the pot.

The Śālāgrāma representing Viṣṇu is brought and wor-

shipped with the sixteenfold ritual, and the performer then performs his ordinary Sandhyā.

This done, a knotted piece of darbha-grass is placed on a stool to represent the spirit of the dead man. It is noteworthy that this spirit is no longer called a *preta*, but having by now been united with its ancestors, it is given a new appellation, which varies according to its past caste, the spirit of a dead Brāhman which has reached this stage being called a *Śarmā*, that of a Kṣatriya a *Varmā*, that of a Vaiśya a *Gupta*, and that of a Śūdra a *Dāsa*.

The bundle of grass is then worshipped in the fivefold way, after which different relatives come forward and (if they have not already made similar promises at the time of the man's death) promise to do and give various things, such as to pour water on this spot for ten or fifteen days, or to give grain to pigeons for ten days, or to fast themselves for some fixed period.

All the gifts that were promised the day before, such as bed, clothing, shoes, umbrella, cow, vessels, gold, for the use of the man in the next world are now actually given; and, in addition, each of the assembled Brāhmins is presented with a sweetmeat.

When all the gifts have been made, the performer puts the earthen pot that holds the water on his right shoulder and walks away till he comes to a *nīm* tree, or, failing that, to any other green tree. He pours some water from the pot on its roots and walks back to his house, repeating the sacred word *Om* as he walks.

Sometimes weeping relatives walk with him, also repeating *Om*.

When he returns to the house, the priest pours some water into the performer's hand, which he sips, but immediately spits out again, being careful not to swallow any of it.

The mourning<sup>1</sup> is now absolutely ended in the case of an old man's death, and, to mark its completion, the father-in-law

<sup>1</sup> Mourning and *sūtaka* must not be confused.

of the performer of the Śrāddha presents him with a turban of red, the most auspicious of all colours, and also marks his forehead with a red *cāṇḍalo*.<sup>1</sup>

Two auspicious substances, curds and turmeric, are given to him, and he rubs them together in his hands, holds them close to his face and gazes at them.

To close the ceremony, Gaṇeśa is worshipped with the sixteenfold ritual, and the priest blesses the performer, who in his turn gladdens the priest by offering him alms varying from ten to fifty rupees. Alms are also distributed to the other Brāhman present.

That evening a noteworthy gift is made to the nearest temple of Śiva, consisting of a lamp with three hundred and sixty-five wicks, one for each day of the year, which is burnt before the liṅga, the phallic symbol of Śiva.

Moreover, from this thirteenth day onward for three hundred and sixty-five days, every new first-fruit of the season, such as the first ripe mangoes, the earliest jujube, sugar-cane, gram, must be given either to a Brāhman or to children, before any of the members of the bereaved household partake of the product.

The performer also takes a vow on this thirteenth day that, when the sun turns to the north again (i. e. on Uttarāyaṇa Saṅkrānti Day), he will give thirteen black pots again to a Brāhman.

The proper performance of all these ceremonies is of the greatest advantage to the performer, as well as to the dead man's spirit, for when once the preta has changed into a Śarmā, or its equivalent, the performer and his household are, of course, insured against any harm being inflicted on them by that spirit as a preta.

However black the dead man's karma may have been, and whatever else it may force him to become, it cannot, once

<sup>1</sup> The mourning would not end so soon, and the turban would never be given at the close of mourning, for a young person.

these rites are all correctly completed, make him continue as a preta.

To linger as a preta is the most dreaded of all states, for a preta has a throat as narrow as the eye of a needle, so it can neither drink water nor breathe, and its shape is such that it can never stand or sit, but it is for ever flying in the wind.

It is quite true that a preta is not in hell, but its state is worse than if it were.

The preta continues in that terrible state not, as we have already seen, owing to any bad karma it has acquired, but, generally, owing to the way in which its Śrāddha has been either omitted or bungled. There is, however, another thing that may hold a spirit in this terrible condition, and that is the force of its unfulfilled desires; and the reason why the most terrible of all preta is that of a woman who dies in childbed<sup>1</sup> is that she, poor soul, has more unfulfilled desires than any one else could have.

There are well-known cases of the preta of such poor women worrying their relatives. For instance, in a certain native state a young wife, who died when her child was born, to this very day visits the house of her brother-in-law, and burns the clothing and bedding of every member of the family, but never destroys the property of any guest.

And in another village a young *Kaṇabī* woman went back to her old home and, not content with stealing bread from it, used to set fire to other food and to furniture.

These disembodied spirits, however, can communicate with mortals, for every preta is like the wind, and so can enter another person's body quite easily, making them shake and shake, as witness of their presence, and can then say which of their desires were unfulfilled, and what steps must be taken.

<sup>1</sup> When every other argument had failed, the writer once persuaded a stony-hearted woman to call in medical assistance for her daughter-in-law, who had been two days in agony, by asking her if she were not afraid of being haunted by the *preta*.

So, for instance, this Kaṇabī woman said what she desired, and offered to give up stealing bread if her husband would have her funeral ceremonies carried out with some pomp. Her husband spent two hundred rupees on having fresh and more elaborate Śrāddha rites performed for her, and she has not been heard of since.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HINDU PENAL CODE

The Journey to Yama's Court—Arrival there—Judgement—Hell—Karma—Heaven—The Unhappy Dead—Ascetics—A Child's Funeral—THE WIDOW—A Widow's Mourning—The Widow's Lot.

AS we have already seen, the spirit in the *Yātanā Śarīra* takes a year to reach Yama's abode in the south. It stays at various places on its way, and we saw how the Śrāddha that was performed was timed to give it food and water at each of the fifteen halting-places. The journey is terribly painful, but the friends of the spirit try to help it by providing it with shoes, umbrella, clothing, money, &c., all of which they give to a Brāhman, in the hope that the preta may benefit.

They also hope to provide it with a light for each of the three hundred and sixty-five nights by means of the lamp with that number of wicks which they have given to Śiva's temple, as well as with fresh fruit from the firstfruits they give to Brāhmans and to children.

On this terrible journey the spirit is accompanied by the two awful dogs of Yama: Śyāma (Dark) and Śabala (Grey), which, though they protect him from the attacks of other dogs, are themselves so fierce, that the friends of the dead man do wisely in trying to keep these two ghostly dogs in a good temper by feeding other living dogs in this world.

The preta does not reach the kingdom of Yama till twelve months have passed, but we saw that, owing to the uncertainty of life and the overwhelming importance of the Pure Śrāddha and the Śrāddha of Union, it is now usual to antedate them, and these, which should coincide with the spirit's arrival at

Yama's kingdom, are actually performed on the twelfth day after death.

We have now to see what happens when the soul reaches this dread kingdom of Yama.

Before it can actually enter it, the spirit, if he is a sinner, and so travelling by the southern route, has to cross the horrible river of Vaitaraṇī, which is full of blood and filth, and then it is that he needs the help of a cow's tail to pull him across and out on to the other side.

There are four gates to the kingdom of Yama, three of which are reserved for ascetics, for saints, and for brave warriors who never turned their backs to a foe, but died on the field of battle.

All sinful spirits, however, pass in through the south gate.

None of the surviving relatives are sure by what route the preta is travelling, hence the gift of the cow.

The prime minister of Yama, Ītraguṇṇa, keeps a separate book for every man on earth, in which all his good or bad actions are recorded.

Every day the servants of Ītraguṇṇa, the sun, the moon, the earth, the sky, the wind, day and night, the two twilights, water, fire, the man's own heart, and a special class of Brāhman called Śravaṇa, report to Ītraguṇṇa; Yama, too, tells what he has seen, and this is all recorded in the dread book, which is opened after the twelve-month journey is completed.

Accordingly, if a man be wise, he will during his life make a daily offering of water (*arghya*) both to Ītraguṇṇa and to Yama, the terrible Dharma-rājā.

Once upon a time there was a very wicked man who, despite his wickedness, never failed to make this daily offering of water, and one night Yama appeared to him in a vision and said that his daily offering had had such an effect, that if he would build a tank to hold water and plant trees all round it, that, combined with his past offerings, would suffice to blot out all his past sins.

He built the tank and planted the trees, and in his next

life avoided all unpleasantness, being immediately reborn into a wealthy and exalted family, for the merit won by building the tank had neutralized his evil karma.

When the spirit presents itself at Yama's court, that king turns to his prime minister, who reads out all the dead man's records. Yama then pronounces sentence on the soul, and always in such a way that the punishment fits the crime. For example, if the dead man has been miserly, he is now sent to a hell where his body is all sewn up, and he sleeps on spikes; if he has ill-treated animals, he is sent to a hell where the animals all torment him; if he has been untruthful, his tongue is cut out; if he loved hearing scandal, his ears are nailed up.

Altogether there are twenty-eight hells into which a soul can be sent, and the worst of them all is the hell called *Raurava*, which is full of snakes and hideous beasts.

When the soul has served its time in hell, it is reborn, it may be as a man, a beast, or a plant, according to its karma, and it is given a body—a *Kāraṇa Śarīra*—good or bad according to its past actions, in which to enjoy or suffer the fruit of karma.

It is this *accumulated energy of past actions*, or *karma*, which also decides whether, if it be reborn as a man, the soul is born as a rich or as a poor man, as a Brāhman or a sweeper; and whether in his subsequent life he is to be good or bad morally.

Similarly, if the record which Īitrāgupta reads to Yama contains more good than evil, the Dharma-rājā sends the soul to a temporary heaven (*Svarga*)—i.e. one whose bliss he will have to leave when he has completed the full period to which his past good deeds have entitled him.

In case, however, a man has accumulated both good and bad karma in his past life, he will have to suffer both good and bad things in his life after death. First, he will work off his evil karma by enduring suitable suffering, and then he will proceed to enjoy the happiness earned for him by the accumulated energy of his past good actions.

In each case, after the soul's term in heaven or hell has been



served, it will be reborn according to its karma in a *Kāraṇa Śarīra*, and in each case the punishment will exactly fit the crime. Thus, the soul of an impure man will find itself reborn as a dog; the soul of a man who welcomed the defiling qualities of untruthfulness, meanness, or falseness will be reborn as an outcaste or 'untouchable', one whose very touch is defiling; the soul of a man who habitually ate with his eyes shut will be born as a cat; whilst that of a woman who in a past life ate her meals before her husband had had his will be reborn as a flying fox.

We shall have to discuss the whole question of karma later, but this much we may admit at once, that the theory is a magnificent attempt to justify the fundamental law of righteousness by which men feel, as all literature shows, that the world is governed, and to account for the suffering and inequalities so noticeable in this present life, by reference to actions committed in a past life.

Many of the most thoughtful Hindus, however, are beginning to feel that, instead of answering their question, it only evades it by pushing it farther back.

If, they say, a man is born a thief in this life because of his previously acquired bad karma, what was it in the life before that which forced him to accumulate that bad karma, and what bad karma in the life before that again gave him a propensity towards evil?

They seem to themselves to be involved in a vicious circle of evil actions leading to evil karma and evil karma leading to evil action, but the question which the doctrine does not seem to them to answer is: 'What laid the first foundation-stone of the evil structure? From whence did the first malign influence come?'

Another point that the recent war has brought into strong relief is that the doctrine of karma does away with all vicarious suffering, all public spirit. A V. C. who dies heroically trying to save a wounded comrade is, according to this theory, not a hero but a detected and sentenced criminal, who

loses his life, not through present unselfishness, but owing to the bad actions he has committed in the past ; and, of course, a shirker saves his life, not through cowardice, but as a reward for past good conduct.

The most earnest men in modern India, as we shall see later, find that all their efforts towards reform are shackled by the twin ideas of karma and caste, which are inextricably linked together. A member of a low caste is just a wicked man painfully working out the penal sentence earned by past sins ; his high-caste fellow-citizen moves conscious that he is a morally self-made man, and that his happy condition has been won for him by his good deeds in a former life.

One good action, however, can outweigh a great deal of bad karma. If, for instance, a man on the point of death remembers God for the short instant that a mustard seed can rest on the horn of a cow before being shaken off, he will gain sufficient merit to 'take him to heaven (*Mokṣa*)'.

The real difference between *Mokṣa* (or *Mukti*) and *Svarga* is that, once *Mokṣa* is attained, the soul will never again have to leave it, but is for ever free from the sorrows of rebirth, while *Svarga* is a temporary heaven.

There are several *Svarga*: *Kailāsa* is the heaven of the god Śiva; *Goloka* that of the god Kṛṣṇa; Indra dwells in *Indra-loka*; Viṣṇu in *Vaikunṭha*; Devī in *Maṇḍvīpa*.

But *Mokṣa* is a state higher than that of any of the temporary gods ; it is the state of *Paramātman* (the Supreme Soul) alone. In *Svarga* there are endless delights: fair maidens and beautiful flowers and trees set in exquisite gardens, through which cool rivers flow. But the *Jīvātman* (the individual soul) that has attained to *Mokṣa* now at last loses all its individuality and becomes one with the Supreme, indissolubly blended with, not Him, but It.

There are four stages of *Mokṣa*: the first or highest is called *Sāyujya*, when the soul is absorbed in the *Paramātman* as the river is lost in the sea, or as the nectar of a flower is merged in the sweetness of honey. There is no persistence of

personality: the soul has done what it ought to have done, and there is nothing left to do, or to attain to, or to gain. This utter absorption is the highest stage of Mokṣa that any soul can reach, though, as a rule, it is only gained by a Yogī.

If a soul reaches the second highest stage (*Sārūpya*), it is not indeed absorbed in the *Paramātman*, but some of the glory of the *Paramātman* is reflected in the soul that has attained, as the glory of the moon is reflected in a clear still lake.

In the third stage (*Sāmīpya*) the soul is in the immediate presence of the *Paramātman* and as near as a nestling child is to its mother.

In the lowest stage (*Sālokya*) the soul is still in the neighbourhood of the *Paramātman*, as a subject moves in the same realm as his king.

But the common people seem to believe that very often, without passing through either heaven (*Svarga*) or hell (*Naraka*), the soul is reborn immediately after death.

For instance, they tell a story of a holy ascetic which is worth recording, since it also shows the immense importance of the thought that passes through the mind at the moment of death.

This ascetic was so very holy, that he was promised that on his death celestial drums should sound. Most unfortunately, however, just at the very moment when he was dying, he spied a particularly fine fruit on a jujube-tree, and it simply ruined his mind. Instead of thinking only of spiritual things, his thoughts were full of the jujube, and he longed for it with a passion that ill became a man who had renounced all. Then suddenly he died; but, to the intense chagrin of his waiting disciples, there were no drums to be heard. They asked a sage the reason, and he told them that it was owing to the inordinate desire of their master for the jujube fruit. The sage thereupon opened a jujube berry and showed them a worm. 'Inside that worm', said he, 'is your

late master's soul.' As the sage spoke, the worm died, and instantly there was heard the sound of drums.

The ascetic had been compelled to undergo rebirth owing to his dying thought and passion for the fruit, but, that single rebirth accomplished, he had passed safely with the pomp of drums to Liberation.

Not only is the thought at the moment of death important, but the spoken word is supremely important also. For instance, there was once a Brāhman called Ajāmila, who, though originally very learned and pious, fell eventually into temptation and lived for eighty years with a courtesan. Like many other Hindus, he named one of his sons Nārāyaṇa. Now this name is a source of spiritual profit, and every time he summoned the boy by name he gained merit for repeating the name of a god. When on the point of death he wished to speak to this son, and so called loudly: 'Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa!' Uttering this word he expired. This was sufficient, and when the dread servants of Yama came for the soul, they were not allowed to take it, but he was sent back to earth at once to have another chance of living as a devout ascetic. He made the most of the opportunity thus given to him, lived and died in the odour of sanctity, and acquired so much merit, that he is now one of the Liberated, all owing to the lucky accident of his having shouted to his son as he died,

A man who commits suicide becomes either a *Preta* or a *Bhūta*. It is worse to be a *preta* than a *bhūta*, for, after all, a *bhūta* does have the fun of frightening folk, which is a sort of sport, whereas a *preta*'s time is spent in unrelieved misery.

There are many other kinds of ghosts: a *Dākinī* is the female ghost of a woman who has died in child-birth with many desires unsatisfied. She has no covering of skin down her back, so the horrible raw flesh itself can be seen. This sort of ghost is dreaded for its malignity after death; but a woman who has the baleful power of the evil eye is just as much dreaded during life as a *dākinī*.

Then there are three different classes of ghosts: the *Māmā* are very tall, so tall that their heads reach the sky; they live in *khadira* (acacia) trees and frighten men. (One lived in a tree in the writer's compound for years, but unfortunately no one save a drunken groom ever saw it!)

Not unlike the *māmā* is the *Kharisa*, who also loves to frighten people, but it is easier for him to do it than for most, because he is headless.

And thirdly there is the *Jinn*, a ghost of Muḥammadan origin, whom the Hindus, not having enough of their own, have imported, and he, like most aliens, is the worst of all.

Any one of these three, if disturbed or irritated, can take possession of a man's body and can never be exorcized. Holy people never see them, but people given to drink are peculiarly liable to their attacks. If they are well treated, however, they sometimes become the obedient servants of mortals and show them where treasure is hidden.

Besides these there are demons (such as *Pisāca*, *Rākṣasa*), who usually fight with and tempt the gods, not men. Sometimes, however, these also take possession of a mortal man's body. (A Brāhman after death could become a *Brahma-rākṣasa*.) As we shall find later, *Kālī caturdaśī* is the day when the attacks of the unhappy dead are most dreaded.

An ascetic, as we have already seen, is not burned, but buried. When he dies, his skull is broken open by a blow from a conch-shell, and when he is buried, a shallow earthen pot is put on his head like a hat, to cover this break. He is placed in the grave in a sitting posture and surrounded with salt and sand.

The grave is filled in and later covered with a platform of masonry, on which are put models of the ascetic's feet. Between the feet one sometimes sees a lotus-flower, and at the corners a conch-shell, a man, a wheel, and a mace. Sometimes (as in the case of the ascetics called *Aṭṭa*<sup>1</sup>) one sees instead

<sup>1</sup> No true ascetic is allowed to wear a turban, but these people, who are

a *liṅga*, and sometimes only a little niche, in which a lamp may be burnt, if the ascetic was not popular enough to earn a memorial.

There is no fear of an ascetic becoming a *preta* or a *bhūta*, as he had already performed his own *Śrāddha*. No *Śrāddha*, therefore, is performed for him after death, but varying worship is offered on the anniversary of his death at his tomb. *Viṣṇu* is sometimes worshipped in the sixteenfold way under the form of a *Śālagrāma* by the ascetic's chief disciple or son;<sup>1</sup> even if the ascetic had been a follower of *Śiva*, the worship may be paid to the *Śālagrāma*, not to the *liṅga*.

Neighbouring ascetics are called in and fed, but only ascetics in good standing (such as *Dandī*, but not *Atīta*) are summoned.

We have described the funeral of grown men and women, but, sad as they are, they have not the hopeless pathos that surrounds the death of a little child in India. If the child is under eighteen months, it is not put on the ground to die, but the broken-hearted mother is allowed to hold it in her arms till its last little fluttering breath is stilled.

A lamp of clarified butter is lighted, and alms are given to *Brāhmins* before the child's death. There are no special death or burial rites, for the child must have been a monster of iniquity and lust in its past life to have accumulated so much malignant karma; indeed, the karma that does not allow a child to live beyond twelve months or so must be unspeakably terrible.

The wee body is wrapped in white cloth, in which a pice and a sweetmeat are tied, and it is carried outside the town, not to the burning-ground, but to a piece of waste land in which such children can be fitly buried.

accounted as fallen ascetics, wear a turban of saffron colour; hence they are sometimes called *Lālapāghaḍī*.

<sup>1</sup> The writer once observed a ceremony of this kind, when the chief mourner offered coco-nuts, clarified butter, and red powder at the tomb, and also lit a tiny pile of cow-dung and coco-nut. After this the other descendants, both sons and daughters, worshipped the grave with joined hands, but the sons' wives worshipped by lifting up the corner of their saris.

The little grave is dug, narrow at the top and wide at the bottom, water is sprinkled on it, and a pice put in it, and then the child is buried, stones and thorns being heaped on the top to keep off scavenging dogs and jackals. The funeral is only attended by men, who wear just their loin-cloths and sometimes repeat 'Rāma, Rāma' as they walk. The ceremonial defilement (*sūtaka*) only lasts for three days, and on the fourth vegetables and milk are distributed amongst children. There is no fear of being haunted by so tiny a child, for it can have had no desires, and no Śrāddha is therefore performed for it. The baby died through its own wickedness, and so there is no hope for it. It must have been wicked indeed to have died so early, and so it will have to go through all the eighty-four lākhs of rebirth.

The writer will never forget the desolate hopelessness of the first child's funeral she saw: the men who were burying it seemed absolutely convinced of the baby's horrible wickedness, hurrying it out of sight as a thing stained by guilt. In sharpest contrast to their shallow condemnation one seemed almost to hear the voice of the Great Child-lover:

'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of *such* is the kingdom of Heaven.'

One of the gravest problems confronting the splendid band of Indian men and women who are working for the uplift of their country is how to alleviate the sufferings of widows.<sup>1</sup> It is quite impossible for us to understand the position of a widow in India, unless we grasp these two facts: first, that her sorrows are believed to have come upon her as a punishment for sins in a previous life; and second, that it is not in accordance with the honour of her late husband's family that she should look beautiful, well, or happy.

If a woman commit adultery, the malignant karma she thereby acquires will force her to become a widow not once but many times. Indeed, the popular belief is that during

<sup>1</sup> The writer is deeply indebted to two fine non-Christian women reformers who have worked over this chapter with her.

no less than seven subsequent lives it will be her hideous fate to be born as a woman, and to undergo the terrible suffering of widowhood; others only go so far as to say that, as widowhood is the worst punishment, it must have been inflicted for the worst crime, and the blackest of crimes is adultery or murder. But however this may be, the writer has found that no Indian woman could talk to her about the sorrows of widowhood, and especially of child-widowhood, without tears; for it must be remembered that Hindus are naturally kind and indulgent to children, and but for the force of the doctrine of karma would not ill-treat them.

If, when a girl child is born, *Maṅgala* (Mars) is in the seventh mansion, her parents fear at once that she may become a widow, for, of course, it can only be the evil karma that the child acquired in her previous existence that has forced her to be born under that star.<sup>1</sup>

After her husband's death, when his body is taken away to be burned, his widow, after taking the seven steps that link her happy wedding day to this terrible day of bereavement, returns home and sits mourning. Other women come in, and, about the time when the pyre is lit, they bathe, sometimes in the house, or, amongst other sects, at the river, if it is near at hand, but never near the spot where the corpse is being burnt. If the widow bathes at the river, her glass bangles are broken there by some widowed relative and thrown into the river.<sup>2</sup> After bathing, she dons some old *sārī*—not as yet black in colour<sup>3</sup>—goes and sits in one corner of the room and, even if pressed to do so, takes no food all day.

<sup>1</sup> Once in the twelfth century a great astrologer, realizing that his daughter Līlāvātī was born under *Maṅgala*, determined that she must never marry; so he educated her himself, especially in mathematics, and it was this Līlāvātī—an earlier Mrs. Somerville—who, so they say, taught the Arabs algebra.

<sup>2</sup> Another custom amongst certain Brāhmins is to place the widow's broken bracelets on the bier beside her dead husband. If the husband has died in a foreign land, the broken bracelets are always thrown into the river.

<sup>3</sup> In the Marāṭhā country a widow never wears black, but white.



For a long time, probably a year (unless the mourning is lightened), she will continue to sit in that corner, and never go out, even to answer the calls of nature, save at twilight.

For ten days she only eats one meal a day, and for a year at least would not take any sweet food.

On the thirteenth day her own mother brings a *sārī* for the poor widow. The four corners of this are dipped in water used during the *Śrāddha* ceremony, and then the widow leaves her corner and stands up, whilst some other widow puts it on her.

This *sārī* is called a *pota sārī*, and for a year the widow must wear it, but so unlucky is it, that no one of her dead husband's relatives will ever let the hem of this garment touch them.

But the crowning shame of a widow is her shaven head. The barber is called in<sup>1</sup> on the day of the husband's death to shave all the hair off, and never again is it allowed to grow even as long as an Englishman wears his hair. This shaven head is the widow's scarlet letter, which, together with her terrible name *Rāṇḍirāṇḍa* (one who has been a prostitute) testifies that she is now penalized for the sins of a previous life.

The terrible thing—the fact that tears one's very heart-strings—is that the younger, and therefore the more unprotected and helpless the widow is, the more it proves how vile her sin must have been. When an older woman loses her husband, her sin cannot have been so black as that of a little clinging child of six or seven. 'If a widow has a son', the proverb runs, 'her *sārī* has only slipped from her head to her shoulders, but if she be widowed whilst young and childless, her *sārī* has slipped right to the ground, and she is left naked and defenceless.'

Again, it is not in accordance with family honour that any

<sup>1</sup> In the Marāṭhā country this shaving is always done in strict privacy by a male barber, no one else being allowed to enter the tiny room whilst it is going on. The poor girl is thus left absolutely unprotected. Indeed the mother-in-law stands outside and guards the door, lest any one should enter, for that would bring fresh ill luck on her house.

widow should look happy, and one friend of the writer <sup>4010</sup>~~told~~ her how her relatives came and threw themselves down on the road for the cart that was taking her to a training college to pass over them; for they said that if she went and studied there, she would grow happy, and that would destroy the family honour for ever.

Neither must a young widow ever look well nourished or full-blooded, and so, whilst she sits in her corner, she is given the grinding for the entire family, and not only so, but very often her mother-in-law tries to make money out of her by taking in grinding from the neighbours for her to do as well. She is made to keep every fast, and on the other days is given as little food as possible. One widow told the writer that she would never forget, when, as a little hungry child-widow, she once took an extra handful of rice, the stinging tone in which her mother-in-law asked her for what new man she was fattening up her body.

For thirteen days the widow must stay in her mother-in-law's house, but if on the thirteenth day, when she comes to give the special *sārī*, the mother finds that her daughter is being really starved, she may insist on taking her home. At the end of the year, in any case, the widow is invited to a meal in her mother's house, the *pota sārī* is taken off, and a black<sup>1</sup> one put on in its stead. From henceforth the widow, if elderly, must always wear black<sup>2</sup>—black *sārī*, skirt, and camisole. Never, of course, may she wear jewels at her ears, nose, throat, or wrists, never mark her forehead with auspicious mark, nor ever ornament herself with scent or flowers.

Wherever she goes, she is considered unlucky; it is a dishonour to her husband's family if her face be much seen in public. A widowed friend of the writer's told her that what cut her most deeply was when she noticed that even an old

<sup>1</sup> In Kāthiāwār, at least, a widow must always wear dark colours—a young widow might later on wear dark red or dark blue.

<sup>2</sup> This is not the case in many other parts of India.

friend would return to his house and make a new start, if she was the first person he met.

But it is when her own mother and father are dead at the time of her bereavement that the child-widow feels the full blast of her sorrow, when there is no one to protect her from her mother-in-law's biting tongue, as she tells her that it is her fault the beloved son died, that her foot is for ever the bringer of misfortune (*īhapara-pagī*); no one to remonstrate, when all the heavy work of the house is thrown on her, and her mother-in-law beats her, and her father-in-law thrashes her for not completing some impossible task.

All the finest intellects amongst the Indian reformers are trying to grapple with this agonizing problem. Some boldly hope to solve it by encouraging widow remarriage. Unfortunately it is the highest castes—the Twice-born—such as Brāhmans, Bhātiās, Rājputs, Baniās, &c., who forbid their widows to marry again, and so other castes, who are trying to rise on the social ladder, begin their climb by insisting on perpetual widowhood. One thing is in favour of remarriage, that there is no fear of the second husband dying; for the evil planet, *Maṅgala*, that exercised so malign an influence, has been propitiated by the death of the first husband and would not injure a second. But the real objection of a Brāhman to a second marriage for a woman is that it offends his idea of chastity. A gift, they say, can only be made once, and as the bride was given to the bridegroom at her wedding, she can never be given a second time to any one else.

One thing that has ameliorated the lot of widows is that many are now being trained as teachers; unfortunately their health very often does not permit them to take up professional work. Indeed, a real difficulty for reformers lies in the fact that even the more intelligent women are often so obsessed with the idea that their own sin has caused the death of their beloved husbands, that they themselves are determined to undergo every possible penance, and to become what is known as 'a good widow'. Imagine the blackness of grief, when to

the natural sorrow of bereavement are added the growing pangs of remorse for unknown sin in a former life. No wonder that a sensitive, highly-strung woman who really holds this terrible creed should emaciate her body by fast and vigil, until, as a reformer said to the writer, 'The poor half-starved creature has not enough force left in her to be of use to any one'.

To state the problem fairly (and in so difficult a problem as this nothing is gained by exaggeration on one side or the other) emphasis must be laid on the fact that, as long as her own parents are alive, a widow's lot is often not unendurable. (A widow may need the help of her parents, even if she has children. One Indian lady told the writer that she distinctly remembered that her own widowed mother, though she had children, was being slowly starved to death, till the grandmother interfered and took her to her own house.) Moreover, if the widow is senior enough to rule the house, her lot is not unbearable. Or again, even if her own parents are dead, the mother-in-law might be of a kindly disposition, and so the widow's lot might not always be so black.

But there is a terrible saying: 'Paraffin is cheap'—which has been quoted to the writer more than once when inquiring into the fate of widows in other parts of India, and which throws a lurid light on their fate.

Supposing that a widow's chastity has been considered fair game by the male members of her father-in-law's household, or supposing that, having been called an adulteress ever since she was seven years old, the girl at last does live up to her reputation, neither she nor the unborn child will be allowed to live. We English believe *sati* to be extinct; reformers in certain districts of India will tell us differently. They know that there are easy methods of getting rid of an unwanted widow: simply to turn her out of house and home; to push her down a well; to give her poison; to take her on a pilgrimage and either lose her or sell her; or to set fire to her and burn her to death.

It is quite simple to soak a heavy wadded quilt in paraffin,

to tie a young widow up in it, pour more oil over her, set fire to it and lock her up in a room. Then the neighbours can be told that she either accidentally caught fire when cooking, or like a faithful wife herself committed sati; and only God, 'the Judge of the fatherless and the widow', knows on which side the door of that hellish room was locked. 'Paraffin is cheap'—and the family honour has been saved.

In any case, some of the truest reformers are beginning to realize that at the back of all the widow's suffering lies that doctrine of karma which proclaims the widow to be a convicted criminal, and to whom karma is stained through and through by the blood and the lost innocence of the child-widows of India.

PART II  
TIMES AND SEASONS  
CHAPTER X  
A BRĀHMAN'S DAY

SANDHYĀ: Rising — Toilet — Bathing — *Mārjana* — *Tarpaṇa* — *Prātaḥ Sandhyā* — *Smārta Ācamaṇa* — *Bhasma* — Tying of hair — *Āsana Śuddhi* — Breathing Exercises — *Saṅkalpa* — *Gāyatrī Āvāhana* — *Jaladhāra* — *Aghamarṣaṇa* — *Arghapradāna* — *Pradaḥṣiṇā* — *Upasthāna* — Telling one's beads — *Viśarjana* — *Namaskāra* — Eight Tantric Mudrās — Midday *Sandhyā* — Evening *Sandhyā*.

HOMA.

ALMSGIVING.

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

TARPAṆA: *Deva-tarpaṇa* — *Ṛṣi-tarpaṇa* — *Pitṛi-tarpaṇa*.

DEVAPŪJANA: Private Worship — Royal Worship — Temple Worship — Clay liṅga.

VAISŪDEVA and ĀTITHEYA: Balidāna — Gogrāsa.

NAIVEDYA.

MEALS: Breakfast — *Svādhyāya* — Lamplighting — Cooked Food — Supper.

A WOMAN'S DAY: Toilet — Worship — Reverence to Husband — Breakfast — Housework — Afternoon Calls — Evening Worship.

WE have studied in outline the life story of a Brāhman, and now we have to learn the detail of his day, his duties and its worship.

So important are his morning and evening devotions to a Brāhman, that one who wilfully neglects them for three days *ipso facto* slips back to the ranks of a Śūdra, and so highly is the right to perform them valued, that one of the titles that distinguishes a Twice-born from other ranks of society is: 'He who has the prerogative of performing *Sandhyā*'.

The writer accounts it no small privilege that her intimate friends amongst the Brāhmins told her the order and meaning of this deeply-prized worship.

Multifarious as are the duties of the day, it is well worth our while to study them in detail, for, perhaps, in no other way can we learn how much of toilet and etiquette amongst our fellow-citizens is of religious import: even dining is a sacramental act. And we shall not feel that we have entirely wasted the day that we spend with our Brāhmin friends, when we find how many of its happenings point back to the time when we and they, as children of an undivided family, played together on the shores of time.

### *Sandhyā.*

A Brāhmin is expected to get up two hours before sunrise, but even before rising he should think of his *Iṣṭadevatā*. This would probably be the god Śiva, at any rate in the writer's part of India, for there are comparatively few worshippers of Viṣṇu to be found amongst Brāhmins there.

Next, with the object of gaining a happy day, the man looks at his right hand, remembering, as he looks, that the tips of the fingers represent *Lakṣmī*, that *Sarasvatī* dwells in the palm of the hand, and *Brahmā* at the back of it.

It is of great importance that the first thing that a man sees in the morning should be auspicious, so some people wear a gold ring, with a pearl to represent the *liṅga*, and look first at that; others arrange a silver coin bearing the likeness of the king, so that that may be the first thing they see, or else they try to meet some auspicious person: their father, mother, husband, an unwidowed, unbereaved wife, a maiden, a cow, or a little child. (The writer's servants used to go about their work in the morning with their eyes half shut till her tiny daughter appeared.) Photographs and pictures of the gods are hung round bedrooms with the same object.

A Hindu is very careful not to look first at a widow, a scavenger, a broom lying in a corner, a miser, a barren

woman, at a man with tawny eyes, or reddish moustache, or at one on whose chest no hair grows. A childless man is so unlucky, that even if he were a king, the lowest outcaste would not willingly look first at him on rising in the morning. It is, however, quite lucky to see one's own face in a looking-glass.

People are just as careful that the earliest thoughts that they think should be auspicious. In Kāṭhiāwār there are two villages whose names Brāhmans are careful not to remember first thing in the morning; in one a Brāhman was murdered, and the inhabitants of the other are miserly..

It is amusing to compare the care with which, when rising in the morning, a Brāhman puts his right foot first on the ground with the saying so common in English nurseries: 'You didn't put your right foot first out of bed this morning'. Perhaps, too, it shows that in the nursery days of the two races they all 'minded' the same nursery rules.

Before putting his foot on the ground, however, a Brāhman asks pardon from *Prithivī* (mother earth) for treading on the earth, and so touching that goddess with his foot.

As soon as a man is up, he sips a mouthful of water three times in order to cleanse his mouth, but does not swallow it, and then he washes his face. (Not only is every detail of the toilet and the bath part of a religious ritual, but much of it does also undoubtedly make for health and hygiene.)

Next, the position of the sacred thread has to be changed; ordinarily it is worn over the left shoulder, but now it is wound round the neck and then put over the right ear. The right ear is the most sacred part of the body with a Brāhman, since it first heard the holy *gāyatrī* mantra; in fact, so sacred is it, that it can even remove sin. For instance, if a man tells an untruth, or looks on something he should not, he is told to sip water, but if no water is available, he removes the pollution he has contracted by just touching his right ear.<sup>1</sup> So now the sacred thread is wound round the ear to preserve it from all defilement, and the Brāhman goes to some desert place to

<sup>1</sup> Touching the right ear is also a sign of very strong assent.



answer the calls of nature. He must look neither at sun, moon, sacred trees, tilled field, temple, nor ant-hill, and must be at least one hundred yards distant from any house.

He then cleanses his left hand ten times with clay, his right hand seven times, and lastly both together five times, before cleansing the soles of his feet three times. Twelve mouthfuls of water are also sipped and ejected.

This done, the sacred thread can be removed from off the right ear and worn suspended from the neck, as though it were a necklace. Now, and only now, is a Brāhman at liberty to speak; from the moment when he rose till now he has had to maintain the most absolute silence.<sup>1</sup>

The teeth-cleaning follows, and so successful is it, that tooth-ache used to be almost unknown amongst the Hindus.

They never, of course, use a brush, but break off a twig freshly every day from one or other of about nine specified trees, all of which possess thorns and milky juice.

The twig must also be of prescribed length and thickness, i. e. the length of twelve fingers and the thickness of the little finger (say ten or twelve inches long, and one-third of an inch thick) for a man. They must be careful, too, to see that the twig still has its bark on it. A student should rub salt and trifolā<sup>2</sup> on his teeth with the tooth-stick.

A man does not mind being seen whilst he cleanses his teeth, but a young woman will never allow any man to watch her as she does it; though an older woman, or the chief lady of a house, is not so particular.

After the teeth are cleaned (and they rub each tooth separately, as though determined to make that one the brightest jewel in the British crown), the twig is broken in half, and the tongue cleansed with one part; then both bits of

<sup>1</sup> Nowadays many of these rules are relaxed. They are chiefly observed by old retired men, or by the very orthodox amongst the younger men.

<sup>2</sup> There is a proverb that that man will never get ill who cleanses his teeth with salt, his eyes with trifolā-water, sleeps on his left side, and never fills all four corners of his stomach tight with food.

the twig are thrown away, for the European idea of using the same tooth-brush day after day fills a Hindu's mind with horror. But before throwing it away, the twig is addressed in prayer and besought to grant long life, strength, fame, the halo of learning, sons, cattle, wealth, knowledge of Brahma, and intelligence.

Then the mouth is cleansed with water, and the man bows to the sun, asking that that great luminary may do good to all his neighbours and friends.

Next follows the bath (*Snāna*). The man has, of course, to bathe wearing a loin-cloth, since no Brāhman may ever be naked, once he has received the sacred thread. If possible, he should go and bathe in a river that flows directly into the sea; if, however, the nearest river be only a tributary to another river, he must take five lumps of earth out of it and then bathe. (Taking away these lumps is supposed to purify the tributary, which is impure compared to an ocean-going stream.)

If there is no river near at hand, a man may bathe in the courtyard of his house, pouring water over himself from a copper pot. As a rule he bathes in warm water in the cold weather, but he must use cold water on certain special occasions, such as the *Saṅkṛānti* festival, a Śrāddha, his own birthday, his son's birthday, after an eclipse, after attending a funeral or hearing of the death of some friend, and after touching an untouchable.<sup>1</sup>

If a man is ill, he can bathe, as it were, spiritually and purify his body by repeating mantras; by putting some purified clay from the Ganges or Jamnā on his forehead; by rubbing

<sup>1</sup> Some Hindus are much more meticulous than others about bathing, and in Kāthiāwār the most meticulous of all are the *Marajādī*. Those folk bathe in cold water after touching any one, even a man of higher caste, and their other Hindu friends say jestingly of them: 'Poor things, they are just like fish, they spend all their time in cold water, and if they go and fetch water from a river, they sprinkle so much of it on the road to purify that, that they arrive home with an empty jar'. Very few Brāhmans are *Marajādī*, but some men of low castes, such as shoemakers, belong to this class. A Brāhman who is a *Marajādī* can take water from a *Marajādī* of lower caste than his own.

sacred ashes on his person, or by smearing himself with the dust made sacred by the feet of cows.

If a man is well and is bathing in a river, he should stand, or sit up to his waist, in the water. If it is a main river, he should face its source; but if it is only a tributary, or if he is bathing at home, he should look at the sun. He takes some water in the cavity of his hand, bending down the first finger and putting back the fourth finger, and then, pouring the water into the river (or at home on the ground) he says: 'I (. . .) on this day (. . .) of the year (. . .) of the month (. . .) at the hour (. . .) take this bath to remove my sins of body, mind, speech, and touch, and to gain success in everything I undertake to-day'. Next he invokes the rivers *Ganges*, *Jamnā*, *Sarasvatī*, *Narbadā*, &c., to take up their abode in the river, or in the vessel beside him, as the case may be. Putting his fingers in his ears and nose, and holding them there, he should, strictly speaking, dive thus into the river if possible. (As a matter of fact, he probably dives European fashion.) After massaging his body with his hands, he dives a second time, and after this follows the essential, religious part of the bath.

A busy Brāhman would very likely omit the diving, but he would never omit the rite called *Mārjana*, which only takes two minutes. Holding water in his left hand, he sprinkles water on his head with his right hand, praying the water all the time to remove his sins, to give him strength, and to keep him holy.

He then dives a third time, or, if bathing at home, pours water over himself again from a copper vessel.<sup>1</sup>

The *Tarpana* of the bath follows, when the bather prays to the Sages, the gods of the three worlds, and to his ancestors, asking them to be propitiated.

He then comes out from the river and dresses, removing, of course, his wet loin-cloth. But even here he must observe the

<sup>1</sup> It is most interesting to the Western reader to note that, where there is immersion, affusion is considered also necessary and the more important part.

correct ritual, for if he slip the wet cloth down instead of lifting it upwards, he would have to bathe all over again.

He is now ready to begin his morning devotions,<sup>1</sup> or *Prātaḥ Sandhyā*.

Morning *sandhyā* should be performed whilst the stars are still showing, and before the sun has risen; failing that, it may be done at sunrising, when the sun is half over the horizon; but if the worshipper is later than that he has to do penance.

Strictly speaking, *sandhyā* should be performed three times a day: in the morning, at midday, and in the evening. In the morning the *gāyatrī*, which is repeated at each *sandhyā*, is thought of as a child; at midday, as a young woman; and in the evening, as an old woman. As a matter of fact, however, most people have only time for morning and evening *sandhyā*.

The worshipper prepares for the ritual, either by purifying the ground from the touch of low-castes or the unbathed, which he does by sprinkling water on it; or by placing a low stool on which he may sit. The stool should be covered by the skin of an antelope, or by a mat made either of darbha-grass, of sheep's wool, or of silk. The worshipper sits on the purified ground, or on the covered stool, in such a way as to face the sun, or else the north, which is the direction of the gods.

Whichever way he may have faced in the morning, he would look in the same direction at midday; but in the evening he would almost certainly face the west.

After his bath he dons a silken, a woollen, or a freshly-washed loin-cloth, and wears either a clean towel round his

<sup>1</sup> The exact order of these devotions and the ritual acts vary very much. At the moment of writing, the writer has before her three different accounts: One given by her Sāstrī, which follows the elaborate classic ritual; one by a busy man, who had only time to follow a shortened form; and the third by a schoolmaster in another part of Kāthiāwār; they all differ slightly. The description which follows should therefore be checked by each student in his particular district.

shoulder, or a thin sacred cloth. His sacred thread hangs from the left shoulder, and he sits with back erect and legs folded (right over left), each heel being pushed well into the groin.

Some Brāhmins<sup>1</sup> begin with *Smārta Ācamana*. Taking a brass vessel<sup>2</sup> in his left hand, the worshipper puts it on the ground, and then takes water from it with a spoon, still with his left hand, and puts it in his right hand. (The right hand is held in what is known as the cow's ear position, i.e. the first finger is bent over to touch the second knuckle of the thumb.) Next, laying down the spoon, he puts the first finger of his left hand to the side of the right hand and sips three times from it. If he belongs to certain sects, as he sips, he mentally takes one of the names of Viṣṇu, either Govinda, Mādhava, or Keśava, and desires that the water should make him holy. Each time he sips, he only takes one drop of water sufficient to cover a sesamum seed. (It will be noticed that he only takes the name mentally. Hindus declare jestingly that *sandhyā* is only half audible, and so they call it the thief which no one can detect; whereas the Veda, they say, is an honest man and should be said loudly and clearly, and not as though one were afraid of detection.)

Then follows *Bhasma*<sup>3</sup>, the application of ashes. If the worshipper is at home, he goes into the room set apart for worship; if on the river bank, to some lonely spot, and there opens the little box<sup>4</sup> in which he keeps the ashes he has taken from *Durgāṣṭamū* or some other great sacrifice. These ashes<sup>5</sup> have previously been washed three or four times and reduced to fine dust; they are now for the morning *sandhyā* mixed with water, at midday they are mixed with sandal-wood, and in the evening dry ashes are used. The worshipper puts the ashes in his left hand, and covering them with his right,

<sup>1</sup> Others, holding that *ācamana* has already been done when bathing, would pass directly to *bhasma*.

<sup>2</sup> The vessels required for *sandhyā* are: two shallow dishes, one vessel, two small pots, two small spoons, one *arghya*.

<sup>3</sup> With a busy man this begins the *sandhyā*.

<sup>4</sup> The ashes may be kept pressed together in the shape of a ball.

<sup>5</sup> If the worshipper has no ashes, he may use water instead.

repeats a mantra, whose symbolic explanation was given to the writer as follows: 'Fire is equivalent to ashes, wind is equivalent to ashes, water is equivalent to ashes, sky is equivalent to ashes, everything, mind, eyes and other senses, is equivalent to ashes. With those ashes I mix water which represents light, essence, nectar, Brahmā, the earth, the intervening space between the earth and the sky, and *Om*.' The repetition of this verse sanctifies both the ashes and the water. Next, he lifts up his right hand, pours the water and ashes on to the left, and, after rubbing his two hands together, he extends his arms above his head and, holding his palms out flat towards the sun, says in Sanskrit 'Salutation to Śiva. We worship Śiva, who has three eyes and is the giver of all sweetness and strength, and who will deliver me from rebirths, even as the upper stem of a sugar-melon snaps and lets the melon fall.'

Whilst repeating these words, he encircles his head with his right hand, and certain Brāhmans<sup>1</sup> at this point make the auspicious Viṣṇu mark upward with the right thumb. Next, the worshipper draws with the ashes three lines, across his forehead, the bridge of his nose, and his eyelids, with three fingers<sup>2</sup> from left to right, and then with the fingers of his other hand back again from right to left, and similarly he marks with three lines his biceps, his arms near his elbow and near his wrist, his ribs, and his knees.

Between each act of the morning devotion water has to be sipped (*Ācamana*), and so, when the marking with sacred ashes (*Bhasma*) is completed, water is sipped, before the worshipper proceeds to tie the sacred lock of hair.

Even in the way this Tying of the Hair (*Śikhā-bandhana*) is done there are grave ritual differences. One worshipper told the writer that, as he tied a knot in the lock, he asked the goddess Cāmuṇḍā<sup>3</sup> to take up her abode there and protect him.

<sup>1</sup> Strict followers of Śiva object to the Viṣṇu mark being made. It is interesting to notice that it can only be made with the right thumb.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes two fingers only are used.

<sup>3</sup> A form of Durgā.

Other Brāhmins, however, told her that nothing would induce them to ask a flesh-eating goddess like Cāmuṇḍā to take up her abode in their bodies, so they repeated the *gāyatrī* mantra as they tied the knot.

Once the knot is tied, however, the worshipper again sips water (*ācamana*), saying in Sanskrit, as he takes the three sips: 'May my soul as connected with this world be purified, as connected with intervening space be purified, and as connected with the upper world be purified'.

Amongst certain Brāhmins this is followed by *Mārjana*. Water is taken from the water-vessel and held in a spoon in the left hand. If darbha-grass is procurable, three unknotted blades are dipped into the spoon and thrown over the head. If there is no grass, the three biggest fingers of the right hand are dipped into it, and the water sprinkled over himself by the worshipper. As this is done, a mantra is said, praying Viṣṇu that outwardly and inwardly the worshipper may be purified, whatever condition he is in.

The sipping of water (*ācamana*) of course follows, and then the worshipper proceeds in the same way to purify the ground, or the seat on which he is sitting (*Āsana Śuddhi*), sprinkling water over it, either with darbha-grass, or with his three fingers. As he does this, he prays to Pṛithivī to purify the seat.

But all the previous acts are merely preparatory to the great rite of *Prāṇāyāma* which is now to follow.

The worshipper sits all the time that he is doing it with crossed legs, his left foot on his right thigh, and his right foot on his left thigh. He first presses the third and fourth fingers of his right hand against his left nostril, whilst through his right nostril he exhales all the bad gasses of his body. Next, he closes the right nostril with the thumb of his right hand, and opens the left nostril by removing the fingers that had been against it, and then he inhales air very slowly through his left nostril, mentally repeating, as he does so, the famous *gāyatrī* mantra once (or, according to others, thrice) and the names of the seven worlds.

Until this has been done, he must not bend his back, but now he hangs his head down and keeps both nostrils closed, whilst four times he repeats the *gāyatrī* and the names of the seven worlds. Then he looks up and slowly exhales through his right nostril, contracting his stomach till it has no breath left in it, and whilst he does so he mentally repeats the same mantra and the names twice over.

Next he inhales through his right nostril, doing the mental repetition once. And after that he again hangs down his head, closes his nostril and repeats the formula four times.

Looking up, he breathes out, this time from his left nostril, and goes through the mental repetition twice.

All these separate in-breathings, out-breathings, and suspensions of breathing go to make up one *prāṇāyāma*, and it is repeated till altogether three *prāṇāyāma* are performed every morning.

Of course the manner in which the act is performed varies considerably. In one account with which the writer was furnished the dissenter from the established mode actually went so far as to breathe in first through his right nostril! But this constituted grave error, for the left nostril is the moon, and the right is the sun, and the breath must first be inhaled through the moon nostril, in order that it may have nectar in it.

But there is no doubt that, as with the toilet rules, so these deep breathing exercises do make for health and hygiene.

The next act of worship, *Saṅkalpa*, expresses the worshipper's intention. In his right hand he takes some water and says: 'To-day (*Saturday*) an auspicious day in the month, (—) on the (*third*) of the (*bright*) half of the moon, the conjunction being (so and so), I (so and so) will perform morning *sandhyā*, to remove my sins past and present, big and small'.

This time the worshipper does not sip the water, but pours it down into a shallow copper or silver dish in front of him.

*Gāyatrī Āvāhana*, the invitation to the goddess *Gāyatrī*, follows. As we saw, she is thought of in the morning as



a young virgin, the *śakti* (female energy) of *Brahmā*; at mid-day, when grown older, as the *śakti* of *Śiva*; and in the evening as an old woman, the *śakti* of *Viṣṇu*.

The worshipper seats himself and, with his two hands placed together, says: 'In your name there are three syllables; you are a child; you are wearing the sacred thread and carrying a *lotā*; you are wearing a rosary of sacred seeds and also red clothes; you have four faces; you are sitting on a goose; you are *Brahmā's Śakti* and divinity: you live in *Brahma-loka*; we call you from *Sūrya maṇḍala* to illuminate our intellects. You are *Brahmā's yoni*. We salute you.' He then worships her mentally, believing her to have left the sun and to have taken up her abode in his heart.

*Faladhārā* is next performed. The worshipper takes some water in a spoon in his right hand, encircles his head with it and throws it away to the left. This is done to keep off demons, who would otherwise run away with the merit acquired, steal the things that are offered to the gods and defile everything that has been made holy.

A mantra is said as the water is waved round the head, and this mantra gives the water such force, that it shoots off demons and scatters them abroad.

A further *mārjana* is performed to purify the worship. Water is sprinkled in the same way as before, and the following mantra is said: 'O water, protect us and give us strength, nourishment and light of intelligence. You do good to all; let us have some of your most beneficent essence. Protect us, as a mother protects her children.'

A special act (*Aghamarṣana*) is next performed in order to get rid of the sins of the previous night. Water is sipped as in *ācamana* (save that it is sipped only once), and the following mantra is repeated mentally: 'O sun, burn up my sins of the night: sins of thought, word, or deed, committed by hand, foot, stomach, or by the senses. I throw all these sins into the sacrificial fire of the *gāyatrī*, which is lit in our hearts, that they may be burnt up.'

The sins have to be got out of the worshipper, so he takes up some water and holds it in his right hand. Next, closing his left nostril with his left thumb, he breathes hard down his right nostril into the water, whilst he says the mantra just quoted, and then throws the water and all the sins which it contains violently to the left.<sup>1</sup> As he throws it, he says inwardly: 'May all sins and wicked demons be destroyed'. He throws it with such violence, indeed, that the water is dashed into a thousand fragments, and all the time he keeps his eyes firmly closed, in order that he may not even look at the sinful liquid. Afterwards, too, he is extremely careful to cleanse his right hand, that no defilement of sin may remain on it.

(Showing how literally they take the destruction of the demons by this rite, one Brāhman told the writer that, whereas between every other ritual act he performed one *ācamana*, at the close of *aghamarṣaṇa* he performed two *ācamana* and one *prāṇāyāma*, in order to get rid of the sin that accrues to the worshipper through the destruction of demons.)

After the inevitable *ācamana* has been performed between the ritual acts, *Argha pradāna* follows. The worshipper picks up a long copper spoon, which has a sort of tiny trough running down it. He fills it from the *loṭā* of water, marks it with the auspicious mark and drops flowers and rice into it. These preliminaries all show that a very important rite is going to be performed, and indeed that is the case, as we shall see, for it is nothing less than the rescue of the sun. The spoon is held in both hands, and the water tipped out along the trough, whilst the *gāyatrī* mantra is mentally repeated. (If the worshipper has not one of these special spoons at his side, he pours the water from his joined hands, special care being taken that the first—the *pitṛī*'s—finger does not touch the thumb.) As a rule the *argha* is offered and the *gāyatrī*

<sup>1</sup> Some Brāhmans vary the order of this most interesting act, throwing the water away and repeating the *mantra* afterwards.

repeated three times, but if the worshipper were late in beginning his devotions, and the sun had already appeared above the horizon, the *argha* would have to be offered four times as a penance. Each separate time that water is poured from the spoon, the mantra is mentally repeated. The reason for performing *argha* is that at sunrise demons strive to prevent the sun rising and to shut up its road, and this water keeps them off and opens a road for the sun. If the morning devotions are being performed on a river bank, the worshipper must go down into the river to do *argha*, and if it is a deep river, he must so stand (or if a shallow one so sit) that the water is up to his waist. As he repeats the *gāyatrī*, he pours the water, of course, into the stream.

If morning devotions are being done at home, however, the worshipper either stands or kneels to perform *argha*, and the water from the spoon is poured into a special cup. The worshipper also puts some drops of it which he has taken from the end of the spoon on his eyes, in order to gain some of the power of the *gāyatrī* for himself.

Next, the worshipper takes some water in his right hand, waves it round his head and throws it away (*Pradakṣiṇā*). This he does to protect himself against the attacks of demons. After that he performs one more breathing exercise (*prāṇāyāma*). Strictly speaking, he should at the same time walk round the seat with his right hand towards it, but this is often omitted.

A prayer to the sun (*Upasthāna*) follows the circumambulation.

According to some Brāhmans, the worshipper when reciting it should stand on tiptoe facing the sun, and with uplifted arms, and palms turned towards the sun, should repeat four mantras. Other Brāhmans declare that this is the midday position, and that when the prayer is said in the morning, the worshipper should cross his arms and hold the first finger of each hand against its own thumb in what is called the *Jñāna mudrā* (the mode of holding the hands which symbolizes knowledge and is the correct attitude for the hands whilst preaching).

In the evening, when the prayer to the sun is said, the hands should be so held that they represent a half-opened flower.

In the mantras the worshipper prays that the sun, which gives light to all three worlds and life to all living things, may protect him and keep him from all sins.

The worshipper then proceeds to the *Telling of his Beads*. Sitting down, he either thrusts his hand into a bag of special shape, resembling a fingerless glove, or else hides it in the corner of his upper scarf. If he uses a rosary, he tells the beads by passing them between his thumb and second finger, the rosary itself depending, not, of course, from the inauspicious first finger, but from the second. The rosary has one hundred and eight beads. The worshipper repeats the *gāyatrī* one hundred and eight times, or three, or five, or ten times as often ; for the rosary may be told only once, or again three, or five, or ten times. Up to three times it is accounted as duty, above three there is merit in doing it. Sometimes a rosary is not used, but instead the worshipper tells the knuckles and joints of his fingers, beginning with the third finger.

In any case, the hand should be held close to the body, whilst the beads are told : in the morning near the stomach, at noon close to the heart, and in the evening close to the nose. The periods during which the rosary is said should be divided into four. For instance, if a man is going to spend an hour over it, he should tell his beads very loudly for the first fifteen minutes, whisper slowly and quietly for the next fifteen, repeat the mantra silently in his heart for the next fifteen, and for the last fifteen he should be so completely absorbed in it as not to know where he is.

It is worth while spending special care on telling the rosary, for, though charity is meritorious, and merit can also be gained by acts of mercy and offerings made to fire, yet the merit gained by telling one's beads is the highest of all.

When the telling of the rosary has been completely finished, the *gāyatrī* itself is given leave to return to *Brahma-loka* in a ceremony known as *Viśarjana*.

The worshipper stands up,<sup>1</sup> and, with hands pointed to the sun, he repeats a mantra, asking that that *gāyatrī*, which lives in the summit of the highest mountain in Brahma-loka, and which is worshipped by Brāhmans, may go in peace.

Then the head is bowed to the hands in salutation, and the hands touch the earth (*Namaskāra*).

Finally, the morning devotions are brought to a close by the worshipper performing *Ācamana* twice and repeating a *mantra*, declaring that he offers the *sandhyā* to the gods.

Certain Brāhmans, after repeating the rosary, perform eight *Tantric Mudrās* with their hands.

i. *Surabhi Mudrā*. First the worshipper places his hands in such a way that the fingers represent the udder of a cow, and then he prays that his cows may be protected and that he may get milk.

ii. *Jñāna Mudrā*. The second is *Jñāna Mudrā*, when the worshipper, putting his thumb and first finger together, prays that he may obtain Knowledge (*Jñāna*) and Liberation (*Mukti*).

iii. *Vairāgya Mudrā*. For the third *Mudrā* the worshipper puts his hand in the *Jñāna* position against his heart, and prays to be freed from all worldly care and joined to *Īśvara*.

iv. *Yoni Mudrā*. The fingers are arranged in a special way to represent the female organ, and the worshipper prays to the female powers. Some also ask at this time that in their next birth their mother may be of a noble family, or of high caste.

v. *Śaṅkha*. The fingers are folded to represent a conch-shell (one of the fourteen things churned from the sea and sacred to Viṣṇu), and the worshipper prays for protection from demons, especially from those who would steal his merit. (Viṣṇu has four special weapons to use against demons, of which the conch-shell is one.)

vi. *Kamala Mudrā*. The worshipper joins his two hands together to represent the petals of a full-blown lotus flower.

<sup>1</sup> At noon Visarjana he also stands, but in the evening he sits.

A lotus is another of the four weapons of Viṣṇu which guard against demons.

vii. *Śiva Liṅga*. The hands are twisted to represent the phallus of Śiva, and the worshipper prays that Śiva may be favourable.

viii. *Nirvāṇa*. The hands are arranged in a way that reminds one of the English nursery game: 'Here's the church and there's the steeple'. This represents Nirvāṇa, and the worshipper prays that he may obtain final emancipation and be freed for ever from the terrible shackles of death followed by rebirth.

The *Midday Sandhyā* is a shortened form of the morning *sandhyā*. The worshipper's special object in performing it is to burn up the sins that he has committed since daybreak; to protect himself from demons; to protect the sun, too, which is in constant danger from their attacks; and to gain forgiveness for any defilement accruing from the food that he has taken. As the sun is more powerful, and the demons less powerful, in the bright noontide than in the twilight hours, midday *sandhyā* can be omitted or postponed by a busy man with less risk to himself or to the sun than would be the case if the morning or evening devotions were passed over.

As a matter of fact, most Brāhmanas in Government service combine the midday worship either with the morning or with the evening worship, in the latter case performing the noon *sandhyā* first. The midday rite contains only one *argha*; in the *Evening Sandhyā* it has to be performed three times. As the sun in the evening transfers its powers to the fire, the worshipper asks the fire (not the sun) to burn up all the sins of the day. The ritual follows that of the morning *sandhyā*, but in a shortened form, and is preceded by ritual bathing on the banks of a river, or at home.

### *Homa.*

The next daily duty that awaits a Brāhman, after morning *sandhyā* in all its parts has been successfully performed, is

*Homa*, the offering made to the fire. This offering is made twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, before the worshipper himself breakfasts or dines, the idea being that Agni, having done the cooking, must be fed first. The offering consists of clarified butter, curds, rice, or grain. If no man is present, a woman may make the offering, for it must be done before any one eats. The altar (broad at the top and narrow at the base) is made of copper and was bought originally in the bazaar, but when it was brought home, it had to be purified by having water sprinkled over it from leaves of darbha-grass.

Before making the oblation (*Nitya homa*), the worshipper sips water three times (*ācamana*) and inhales and exhales (*prāṇāyāma*) in the prescribed fashion.

Then he declares his intention of performing *homa*, mentioning his own name and the exact date. The *mantra* asking Agni to come and take up his abode in the altar fire is next recited.

The fire for the altar, in the case of an ordinary Brāhman, is brought from the common hearth, but an Agnihotrī brings fire from the special room.<sup>1</sup>

Then the worshipper stands up, takes three blades of darbha-grass in his hand, and puts them into the fire, asking the god Agni at the same time to be ready to receive the oblation. Following this, water is poured all round the altar, and then two oblations are made, consisting of clarified butter, rice, rice pudding, or milk. The oblation, whatever it is, is carefully covered with fire, that all may be thoroughly cooked, otherwise the god would have indigestion.

<sup>1</sup> The fire must be absolutely clear, but the smouldering embers must not be kindled into a flame by flapping at it with a cloth, or fanning it. Any encouragement it needs must be given by blowing through a hollow bamboo, or the hand arranged funnelwise. The reason given is that Agni resides in our mouth, as we can tell by diving into water (if we speak with our mouth under water, no sound is heard, because the water has extinguished the Agni); and it is by the Agni that lives in our mouth that we must help the fire in the altar. Every day the auspicious mark is made on the altar, and flowers are offered to it. In this connexion it is interesting to remember that Brāhmans believe that the source of water is fire, and the source of earth is water.

Every morning two oblations are made, one to the sun and one to Prajāpati (the Creator and Protector). The object of the oblation to the sun is to procure its favour; of that to Prajāpati to ask forgiveness for any imperfection in the sacrifice.

This done, the worshipper prays to the sun, standing with both arms extended and hands outstretched towards it, and saying: 'May all in this world be happy, may they be healthy, may they be comfortable and never miserable. May the rain come down in the proper time, may the earth yield plenty of corn, may the country be free from war, may the Brāhmans be secure, may the sonless gain a son, may those who have sons gain grandsons, may those without wealth gain wealth, and all live for hundreds of years.'<sup>1</sup>

The worshipper then makes a mark on his forehead with some of the ashes and, bowing to the altar, gives the god permission to depart, saying: 'Depart, O thou best of gods, to thine own place. Fire, go thou to that place where Brahmā and other gods dwell. May the Sun be pleased with this *homa*.'

In the evening also *homa* is performed before the evening meal, but then the mantra is said, not to the sun, but to Agni, who takes care of the night, and the oblations are made to Agni and Prajāpati. But at the end of both morning and evening *homa* Viṣṇu is asked to forgive all imperfections. Whenever *homa* is performed at the thread-giving, hair-cutting, or marriage ceremonies, an offering is made to Prajāpati towards the end of the rites, asking for forgiveness for all mistakes, and then Viṣṇu is asked to forgive. The word at the end of the mantra is *svāhā*. Agni has two wives, Svāhā and Svadhā: Svāhā carries to the different gods the oblations offered to them, Svadhā carries the offerings to the dead ancestors. So at the end of an inauspicious offering to the dead the word Svadhā is used, but in an auspicious offering like the present the word Svāhā is employed.

<sup>1</sup> It throws an interesting light on the supreme importance of the monsoon to the well-being of India to notice its place in this kindly, comfortable, genial daily prayer.



*Almsgiving (Dāna).*

Every day also before breakfasting something should be given or done in charity. To fulfil this duty, uncooked flour, rice, sweet pickles, or a little clarified butter may be given to a Brāhman, but religious instruction given to any one is also included under *Dāna*.<sup>1</sup>

*Reading the Scriptures (Brahmayajña).*

The devout Brāhman also reads the Scriptures<sup>2</sup> every day. He first sits down, and then, taking water in his hand, promises to do *Brahmayajña*, and throws the water on the ground. He next does *Nyāsa* by holding his right hand successively in front of his mouth, two eyes, two ears, nostrils, lips, top of the head, chin, two forearms, navel and back, praying the while that the different gods who protect the different parts of the body may each take up his abode in his special limb or position, and that *Īśvara* may protect the whole body.

He then takes three blades of darbha-grass, puts them and a little water in his left hand, and placing his right hand over it and resting both hands on his right knee, he repeats the *gāyatrī* mantra three times.

Some Brāhmans at this point would only repeat two mantras, the first mantra and the last from the *Yajur-veda*; they would then consider that they had repeated the whole Veda, and throwing away the water and the grass to the north, they would end the rite by bowing to Brahman. Most of the writer's friends, however, arrange to repeat or to read through some religious classic every year, so that by the end of their lives they shall have read through at least the four

<sup>1</sup> The writer, for instance, found it quite impossible to make one of her paṇḍits take any fee for the instruction he gave her year after year about Brāhman rites and ceremonies, as he held that, since she was anxious to learn in a spirit of sympathy, it was his duty to lecture to her as part of his daily *dāna*.

<sup>2</sup> Another name for this reading is the *Svādhya*.

Vedas, the great Commentators, the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa, and the famous Grammar by Pāṇini.

Whatever book they have chosen for the year (it might very likely be the Bhagavadgītā), it must be finished by the date in mid-August when the sacred thread is changed. If the worshipper has been hindered in the earlier part of the year, he will 'cram' hard to get the book finished by the end of the time. A busy man often only reads for two minutes, whereas a man with more leisure should read for thirty. If, instead of reading, the worshipper is repeating what he has learnt from his guru, he holds in his right hand three blades of darbha-grass, and two in his left, whilst he says the mantra.

At the end of either the reading or repetition some Brāhmans repeat the mantra: 'O Viṣṇu, thou art pleased with the sacrifice of speech: show favour to me', and then, 'I give the abode of Brahmā (i. e. my heart) to that supreme good (i. e. Viṣṇu), who lives in the centre of the sun, and who is a witness to all that is done in this world'.

### *Tarpana.*

The worshipper, after sipping water (*Ācamana*), declares that he is now about to offer water to refresh gods, sages, and dead ancestors. It is interesting to notice the position of the sacred thread and of the hands during each different oblation. During all three the man sits on darbha-grass and wears a ring of darbha-grass. Beside him is a copper vessel containing water, darbha-grass, and barley grains.

First, he offers *Deva-tarpana* to the gods. To do this, the worshipper sits facing the east, with his sacred thread in the auspicious position over his left shoulder, and pours the water which he has taken from the copper vessel once over the tips of his straightened fingers. Then, facing the west, he offers refreshment to the great sages (*Riṣi-tarpana*). His sacred thread is now suspended like a necklace from his neck, and he pours water *twice* through the gap left between the little

fingers of his joined hands, which he has arranged like a bottomless cup.

But in order to offer water to the manes (*Pitri-tarpana* or *Yama-tarpana*) the worshipper faces the dread south, his sacred thread hangs over his right shoulder in the inauspicious position, and the water is poured three times from the part of the right hand that lies between the base of the thumb and the base of the first finger.

This threefold refreshment is offered to keep all three (gods, sages, and dead ancestors) happy, and to guard against their injuring the worshipper, and, in especial, to prevent their drinking his blood.

If the worshipper's father is dead, and he is the head of his family, after performing *Yama-tarpana* by which Yama and his attendants have been summoned, he invokes his dead ancestors for three generations back, mentioning the name of his dead father, his dead grandfather, and his dead great-grandfather, and then bows to them. (If the worshipper has a father alive, he need not trouble to do this; his own father will do it, and that will be sufficient.)

The water he offers the dead can be transformed by them into anything that they need, and it is given to them to show the worshipper's gratitude. If the mother be dead, the worshipper in the same way offers water to three generations of female ancestors.

Similarly, the worshipper will pour libations of water to his dead cousins, aunts, uncles, guru, and wife's relatives. The rule runs that a man should offer water for all those dead whom, if they had been living, he would have wished to make happy, especially for the dead who were blind, dumb, deaf, or deformed in this life, or who died in their mother's womb before they came to the birth.

The way in which water is offered to little children who died before they were eighteen months old, and so were buried and not burnt on the funeral pyre, is especially noteworthy. Instead of pouring the libation over his hand near his thumb,

the worshipper dips a corner of the cloth which he is wearing over his shoulder and wrings it out on to the ground.

At the close of *tarpaṇa* the worshipper traces two triangles in sandal-wood paste on a shallow copper dish, in such a way that the triangles face one another.

Six gods (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Mitra, Sūrya, Varuṇa) are invited to take up their separate abodes in each of the six corners of the triangles. The worshipper fills the cavity of his joined hands with water, and offers it to the sun, praying to the sun with hands stretched out towards it.

Next, he bows to each of the gods in their separate corners, and washes the outside of his lips with water taken from the copper vessel, but takes care not to taste or swallow the water, which, having been offered to gods, cannot now be used by mortals. Then he says: 'By this *tarpaṇa* may all my ancestors and Viṣṇu' (whom at this point he regards as the embodiment of his dead ancestors) 'be pleased', and then: 'May this be accepted by Brahmā: I do it for his sake, and not for my own'.

#### *Devapūjana.*

There are five gods: Gaṇeśa, Śiva, the wife of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Sūrya, any one of which may be the special god (Iṣṭadeva) of a Brāhman, but in Rājkot<sup>1</sup>, at any rate, the most usual Iṣṭadeva of a Brāhman is Śiva.

Every morning the worshipper offers his special god special worship; as we have seen, much of his worship can be performed on the banks of a river, but this special *Private Worship* must be done either in a house or in a temple.

Supposing that Śiva be the worshipper's special god, he may place the phallic symbol, the liṅga, in the centre of a group of the other four gods, or he may worship it alone. In either case, to begin his worship, he first meditates on Gaṇeśa, then

<sup>1</sup> The writer would like to take every opportunity of emphasizing the fact that she is only writing of Brāhmans in her own town of Rājkot, Kāthiāwār, and the student must be on the look-out for local variations in his particular district.

declares his intention that he, *so-and-so*, on *such-and-such* a date, will worship Śiva; and then he ceremonially sips water (*Ācamana*) and inhales and exhales (*Prāṇāyāma*).

Next he performs *Nyāsa*, asking each god to take his seat and protect his special part of the worshipper's body.

From this he passes on to worship all the apparatus of worship. The conch-shell, bell, and copper vessel are worshipped by marking with sandal-wood paste and offering flowers. Then water is sprinkled over the apparatus, but this water itself is first sanctified in the most interesting way.<sup>1</sup>

The worshipper bends the first finger of his right hand over the water and moves the hand up and down, mentioning the names of the places of pilgrimage and of the holy rivers, for these names sanctify the water; and then nectar is brought down into it by arranging the fingers of the hand in the *mudrā* that represents the udders of a cow, and holding it thus over the water. This holy water is sprinkled both over the apparatus of worship and over the worshipper.

A lamp is then lighted, and the usual prayer to the light made. *Devanyāsa* follows. If the worshipper's special god be Śiva, he takes a bilva leaf (if it had been Viṣṇu, he would have taken a tulasī leaf) and repeating the *Puruṣasūkta* hymn from the Ṛig-veda, he drops the leaf on the liṅga (or, in the other case, on the *śālagrāma*), being careful not to let his fingers touch the object of his devotion.

He then worships the liṅga in the sixteen ways, repeating during each ritual act one mantra from the same hymn (the *Puruṣasūkta*), which contains sixteen special mantras. The worship ends with the waving of a lamp fed with camphor.

This done, the worshipper frequently prays to *Kubera*, the treasurer of the gods, asking him to bestow wealth.

Afterwards, with his hand hidden either in his scarf of ceremony or in the special bag-glove, the worshipper tells his one hundred and eight beads, each time saying 'Salutation to

<sup>1</sup> The same means should be used in temples also to sanctify the water.

the god Śiva'. Finally he prays: 'May my god be pleased, not for my sake, but for the sake of the whole world'.

If the particular worshipper be wealthy, he may worship his special god with *Royal Worship* (*Rājopacāra*), i.e. with all the pomp and paraphernalia of a king: kettle-drums, umbrella, fly-whisk, music and a fountain; but that is more usually done when worshipping Viṣṇu, the kingly god, than Śiva, the ascetic.

If the man cannot afford to offer the sixteenfold worship, he would just perform the fivefold, and if he has not time to do even that, he would content himself with repeating five mantras to himself and offering mentally the sixteenfold worship and the royal paraphernalia.

For the ordinary *devapūjana* in the house, however, he may substitute *Temple-Worship*, since more merit is gained by worshipping a god in his temple; and if the worshipper has performed all his morning worship up to this point on the bank of a river, he is nearly sure to wend his way to one of the temples of Śiva near the river.

When we come to discuss temple-worship, we shall study the ritual more in detail, but in order to get our bird's-eye view of a Brāhman's daily worship complete, we will just take a look at what he does, remembering, however, that it is only a passing glance, and that we are now concerned more with the man than with the temple, its idol, or its priest.

The worshipper, clad only in loin-cloth and sacred thread, and bearing a small brass pot in his hand, enters the temple courtyard. Since no one may enter the presence of a god empty-handed, he has probably brought with him some rice from home and an incense-stick, and as he walks through the little temple-garden, he picks some flowers and some bilva leaves.

He pours water over the liṅga, marks it with sandal-wood paste (which is on the platform beside him), drops the flowers and the leaves on it, and perhaps red and white powder, lights the incense-stick and waves a lamp.

At the commencement and at the end of the worship, he rings a bell to draw the god's attention. But since the god

Śiva is an ascetic and often lost in contemplation, he also touches the stone bull in the outer shrine, that the animal, shaking its head, may thus shake the invisible rope which is tied to the god's hand and so draw the god's attention also.

Besides this, he circumambulates the temple as far as the water drain and back again.

Whether he has performed his *devapūjana* in a temple or in his own house, he often completes his worship by saying ; 'O great god, forgive my sins, whether done through hands, feet, speech, body, act, hearing, eyes, or mind, and my sins of omission and commission. Forgive all such sins. Victory, victory to you, O ocean of mercy, great god Śiva. I commit thousands of faults from day to day, but regarding me as your devotee, forgive me all these sins. There is no other shelter, you alone are my helper ; so out of mercy, O Lord of the Earth, protect me. You are my mother, father, brother, friend, wealth, learning, everything to me !'

By going to a temple in the morning, a worshipper gains merit ; he gains more by going at midday, but most, as we shall see later, by going at night.

Instead of *devapūjana* either at home or in the temple, the worship of a *Clay Liṅga* (*Pārthiva Pūjana*) is often performed. The worshipper brings with him to the river bank some black earth, which must be absolutely free from stones. He takes it, mixes it with water, sanctifies it with mantras, and rolls it into the phallic symbol of Śiva, the liṅga, being very careful to leave no crack. He makes an image also of the female organ, the yoni, into which the liṅga is set, and over the liṅga he fashions a snake's hood.<sup>1</sup>

The worshipper then puts a flower to his nose and breathes on it. This brings the spirit of the Supreme Spirit, which is in the worshipper's body, into the flower. This flower he puts on the little earthen liṅga, and so transforms it into a divine image.

<sup>1</sup> The snake is often found twined round the liṅga. One (fanciful ?) reason given is that man, the image of God, is also entangled and twined round by *Māyā* (illusion), as poisonous a thing as a snake.

Sometimes he also makes five small balls of black earth, rather oval in shape, each of which represents one of the five mouths of Śiva, and on each of these five balls a grain of rice is placed. Then the liṅga in the yoni and the five balls are arranged on a bilva leaf on a copper dish.

When all is ready, the worshipper sprinkles water over the earthen images and does the sixteenfold worship to them. Worship thus offered is more efficacious than either temple-worship or *devapūjāna* done at home and is sure to bring the worshipper his heart's desire, provided only he remembers this desire all the time that he is worshipping.

After the sixteenfold worship is finished, the god has to be removed from the earthen liṅga. First, the man sniffs the flower, on to which he had before breathed the god from himself, until he has, as it were, inhaled the divinity back into himself; and then he holds his hands over the liṅga and moves them in certain twinings and interlacings (very much like the position of the hands in the old nursery game 'Here's the parson going upstairs').

A devout Brāhman gentleman begins his morning devotions about three o'clock, and the various acts, grouped under the five duties of *Snāna*, *Sandhyā*, *Homa*, *Svādhyāya*, and *Devapūjāna*, take him till about six or seven. He then pauses a little, but before he can breakfast he has to perform his sixth duty, which consists of two parts, *Vaiśvadeva* and *Atithya* (hospitality).

#### *Vaiśvadeva.*

About breakfast-time (i.e. about ten) a Brāhman bathes again and puts on the special cloth which he wears to dine in; he then performs a most interesting ceremony to propitiate all the gods.

The worshipper must wear a ring, either of darbha-grass, of gold, or of twisted copper wire, on the third finger of his right hand. He begins by sipping water (*ācamana*), and then declares his intention that he *so-and-so* on *such-and-such* a date will perform the rite to remove the guilt of life



taken inadvertently in any of five ways: by using pestle and mortar; or the grinding stone; by cooking on the hearth; by crushing insects in the room kept for the water-pots; or when sweeping the floor. The woman who has cooked the breakfast, whether she be the mother, aunt, or wife of the worshipper, brings some fire from the kitchen hearth and puts it in the copper altar which has already been arranged on some freshly plastered ground.

This fire has to be brought from the kitchen in a covered pot. (Supposing the pot were uncovered, some one might burn his hands in it, and if by chance a piece of burnt skin fell in the pot, the fire would become as unholy as the fire that burns a dead man!)

But this covered fire that is brought is holy, and is called the *Pāvaka* or sanctifier.<sup>1</sup>

Sandal-wood paste is sprinkled on the edge of the altar and on the fire itself, and flowers are put beside it. Next, three blades of darbha-grass dipped in clarified butter are thrown into the fire, and water is poured round it. At this point the worshipper stops for a moment and meditates on Agni, who has four horns, three legs, two heads, and seven hands, and then he again offers sandal-wood paste and flowers to the fire.

Rice is now ordered from the kitchen, and the worshipper sprinkles water over the rice and sanctifies it by repeating mentally the *gāyatrī* mantra, and then pouring over it clarified butter.

Out of this rice the worshipper proceeds to make five little balls, each the size of a marble. The first is offered to *Brahmā*, and as the worshipper casts it into the fire, he says:

<sup>1</sup> It may be interesting here to note the names of the other fires that we have either studied already or shall later study.

The fire at *śrāddha* is called the *Aditi*, the mother of gods and the aunt of the demons; the marriage fire is the *Yojaka*, the uniter; the fire lit at a house-warming is the *Satamaṅgala*, the bringer of hundreds of auspicious things; the fire lit at the funeral pyre is the *Kṛavyād*, the eater of human flesh; and the fire lit to propitiate the planets is the *Varada*, the fulfiller of desire.

'*Brahmaṇe Svāhā*', and then : 'This is for his sake and not for mine'. The remaining four balls are successively offered in the same way to *Prajāpati*, to *Grihyā* (the goddess who guards the house), to *Kaśyapa* (the great sage), and lastly to the goddess *Anumati*.

The worshipper may add any other offerings to any god he chooses. But the greatest care is taken that all the offerings shall be completely consumed, and to ensure this, clarified butter and bits of sticks are put on the top of them.

If Agni eats them right up, he will take them to the sun, who will send down blessings in showers to water the earth, which will cause corn, the life of men, to grow.

Another part of *Vaiśvadeva* is called *Balidāna*. The worshipper draws on the ground with water either a square or an oblong, and in this he arranges little heaps of rice one by one. He puts one for *Dhātā*, who created and supports the world, and one for *Vidhātā*, who guides the destiny of men; then he makes four heaps for the goddess of wind, and again four for the four cardinal points; next one for *Prajāpati*, one for *Brahmā*, and one for the Lord of the Intervening-space, one for all gods, one for all creatures, and one for all saints.

#### *Ātithya.*

As he offers the heap to all saints, a dish is arranged containing some of all the sorts of food prepared for the meal, and this dish is then given to any Hindu ascetic who may happen to be outside the house, or, failing one, to a cow. As a rule, an ascetic is to be found begging outside the house at breakfast-time, so many are there in India.

(At this point another offering, *Naivedya*, is also got ready, but it is not offered till a little later.)

The offering to dead ancestors follows the gift to the ascetic. The worshipper places a little heap of rice in the square and says, as he does so, that he gives it to his dead ancestors.

The pot that has held the rice for these various oblations is

then emptied and cleansed with water, the water itself being thrown to the north-west as an offering to *Yakṣma*.

This done, some fresh rice is brought and put apart on a dish for a cow (*Gogrāsa*). The rice will probably not be actually given to the cow until after the meal, but as he sets it apart the worshipper says: 'O cow, you are the incarnation of Viṣṇu's power. You are the mother of all. You stand constantly by Viṣṇu's feet. I give you this *Gogrāsa*. O cow, accept it.'

At this point the worshipper may go outside and make the offering to crows, dogs, and ants, or he may defer it till after breakfast. If he goes out now, he throws some rice to the crows, saying, 'You are Yama, you are also the messenger of Yama. O intelligent crow, take this oblation, and take away with it too all the sins that I have committed either by day or by night.'

He then throws rice or bread to a dog, saying, as he does so: 'I give food to the two dogs, Śyāma and Śabala, born in the *Vaiśvavata* family (i. e. the two dogs of Yama), so that they may protect me on my way (to the kingdom of Yama)'.

After feeding the dogs, the worshipper gives some grains of rice to ants and other tiny insects, saying: 'I give this food to hungry ants to feed them and other insects that have been brought to that condition by their evil karma, and who by their evil karma are tied thereto'.

This done, the worshipper comes back into the house, but before entering it he washes his hands, mouth, and feet.

He next takes ashes from the altar and makes an auspicious mark with them on his forehead, and then gives the fire permission to depart, by bowing to it and saying: 'Oh fire, thou best of gods, go to that place where Brahmā and the other gods dwell'.

He then takes a little water in the palm of his hand and says: 'May Nārāyaṇa himself be pleased by this ceremony of *Vaiśvadeva*. This is done not for my sake.'

Finally, some of the women of the house gather up all the

oblations that have been arranged on the square or oblong piece of ground and give them either to crows or to cows.

This ends the *Vaiṣvadeva* rite, which, according to some authorities, is considered the sixth duty of Brāhmans. (According to another computation it is the twelfth.)

It will be about 10.30 a.m. by now, and some Brāhmans at the end of *Vaiṣvadeva* proceed to perform the midday *Sandhyā*. Others, as we have seen, combine their midday with their evening *Sandhyā*.

### *Naivedya.*

But even now the Brāhman is not at liberty to breakfast, until he has first offered *Naivedya*.

In the old days no one broke their fast till after *Naivedya* had been offered, but in modern times an exception is made for early morning tea. If a little child is hungry, it can be given food that has been left over from the day before. Milk and uncooked sweets can be eaten without any offering to the gods.

As a rule, however, the woman who has cooked the meal, or the first person to eat it, places on a tray a specimen of each dish that will be served at breakfast and carries it to the room of the five gods (Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Sūrya, and Devī). Besides the food, she also places a tulasī leaf, some areca-nut and betel-leaf on the tray, which she deposits on a stool in front of the gods, and then rings a bell, both to attract the attention of the gods, and also to ward off evil demons who might try to steal the food.

Certain Brāhmans then cover their own faces with a specially holy cloth, which is always kept in the room of the gods, and stand opposite to the gods in absolute silence for about two minutes. (Others stand thus silently with eyes averted, but without covering their faces.) During this time the gods do not actually eat the food, but imbibe the sweet savour of it, and the whole meal becomes hallowed. (Indeed, in some *Vaiṣṇava* houses tiny portions from the god's tray are put

on the trays of each diner, to sanctify their food and to cleanse their minds by allowing them to share the meal of the gods.)

The worshipper finally himself takes water three times into his own hand and throws it on the ground, with the intention of providing the gods with water in which to cleanse their hands.

### *Meals.*

At long last, the worshipper<sup>1</sup> himself is free to breakfast, between eleven and twelve.

Breakfasting itself is a religious duty. Every day the ground on which the breakfast is taken is freshly besmeared with cow-dung and clay, and very often marked with chalk or lime in red or yellow designs, sometimes texts, or the English word 'Welcome', being also written there.

On this purified space low wooden stools are arranged, and the senior man of the house is the first to take his seat.

Boys too young to wear the sacred thread can dine as they choose with the women or the men, but those who have been initiated must dine with the males.

If possible, all the men should wear silk clothes to dine in, but if they cannot afford them, they buy a very small woollen cloth (Gujarātī *Dhābālī*), which they only wear when dining. At the right side of each man a water-vessel (*lotā*) is placed, with a cup on the top of it, and he is also provided with a plate of brass and two brass cups (without handles), all of which are coated with tin. (In very rich houses these vessels are of silver, not brass.) As a rule, amongst Hindus uninfluenced by English rule, spoons and forks are not used, but the writer's friends permit her to bring her own with her when she dines in their houses. If there are many guests, plantain leaves and plates and cups fashioned from the leaves of the 'Flame-of-the-forest' tree are used by every one. Before the meal is begun, all the dishes are arranged on the floor.

<sup>1</sup> Only the senior member of the family has time to go through all this ritual; when he has performed it, the others are free to breakfast.

It is unnecessary to say that of course meat is not served, neither are vegetables whose juice is red, such as beet-root or tomatoes. No strict Brāhman would eat onions or garlic.

Many experienced missionaries never allow beef<sup>1</sup> to be brought into their houses, and never eat it themselves, in order that there may be no bar to their sympathetic social intercourse with their Hindu friends.

On the other hand, in nearly every large town now there are 'hotels' with private back entrances, where Brāhmans can go undetected and eat 'red curry', as they call meat dishes.

Such Brāhmans would, of course, be held in the greatest abhorrence by the orthodox, but their number is steadily increasing.

As a rule, it is not a servant (unless in a very rich family) but a lady of the house who brings in the meal. Generally the first things served are thin *chapātī*, unleavened bread in the pancake form. This is put in the middle of the plate; and into a cup at the right side is put curry made of potatoes, cabbage, and Indian vegetables.

The women do not serve pickles and chutney, but these are put in a big vessel, which is passed round from man to man. Cooked food cannot be passed round in this manner, but a separate portion has to be given by the lady serving to each separate person. Clarified butter cannot be handed round either; it is brought in separate spoons from the kitchen and put on the bread on each person's plate.

Curried pulse is next served, in cups, since it is liquid.

And lastly rice, which has been previously mixed with clarified butter, is put on each plate. The serving of the rice is a sign that all is on the table.

Before beginning his meal, each diner (if one may so call a breakfast) should notice whether his five limbs are still damp from his pre-prandial bath, and, if not, he must moisten with water his hands, his feet, and his mouth.

<sup>1</sup> While flesh-eating generally is disapproved of, the eating of beef is regarded with horror by most Hindus, including those who freely eat other meat.

This done, the senior member of the household takes some water in his hand and says: 'I, on such-and-such a date, considering this food as part of Brahmā, offer it to him'. The other diners take some water in their hands with the same intention, though they need not actually say the words. (The water is considered a witness.) A little square of ground is moistened with water, and then each diner mentally repeats the Gāyatrī to sanctify his food<sup>1</sup> and sprinkles a few drops of water over his plate. (If the family priest is dining, he takes the first seat and repeats the Gāyatrī.) Every man also sprinkles water round his plate to keep off the demons, who would otherwise snatch food from off it, saying: 'I sprinkle truth with knowledge'.

Then he makes three little balls of rice, dedicating each to a different god. As he makes the first, he says: 'I bow to *Bhūpati*, the king of the earth'. (Many Hindus believe King George to be the representative of *Bhūpati*.) 'I bow to *Indra*, king of the three worlds, I bow to the Lord of all Creatures (Brahmā).' A little water is sprinkled on these three balls, and they are made into one. They are left on the ground during the meal to satisfy the demons, (who, if they have this food at hand, are not so tempted to snatch from the plates), and at the end of the meal they are thrown away.

After the three balls have been made, each diner takes water in the cavity of his right hand and, pressing the ground with his right foot, says: 'Food is Brahmā, its essence is Viṣṇu, the eater is Śiva. He who dines realizing this is free from the sins appertaining to eating'; and then to the water he says: 'You are the covering of nectar', and sips it.

Every diner eats the first five morsels of rice and pulse in silence (these five mouthfuls are called *Prāṇāhuti*), each morsel being looked on as an offering successively to the

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to notice how closely this resembles the Christian fashion of saying grace.

five *prāṇa*, or vital airs, of the body: *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *udāna*, *vyāna*. Just as the clarified butter was offered to the fire during *Homa*, so now these five morsels are offered to the body.

The diner must touch his plate with his left hand, whilst taking these five morsels in his right hand, and then, washing his left hand, must touch his eyes with it.

After these first five mouthfuls have been eaten in silence, the diners can converse, but often during the monsoon an elderly man takes a vow never to speak at meals during the rainy months. (It is amusing to notice that these vows are scarcely ever taken by young people!) The advantage, so the writer's friends told her, of taking this vow was that, however tasteless the curry, or badly cooked the bread, the diner vowed to silence was saved from the sin of grumbling. (Would it be possible tactfully to draw the attention of certain choleric old gentlemen in England to this interesting Indian custom?) At the end of the monsoon, when released from silence, the vower presents a bell to the temple of Śiva, thus restoring the balance of sound!

As the meal proceeds, if the diner feels thirsty, he must content himself with water, for he is of course debarred by his religion from whisky, wine, or beer.<sup>1</sup> (This is, of course, also the case with Jaina and Muḥammadans, so the more stringent Temperance legislation is made in India, the more it accords with the religious principles of the people.) But even water he must drink in a special way. He must take the brass *loṭā* in his left hand, supporting it also by the back of the right hand, and then pour the water from the *loṭā* in a stream right into the interior of his mouth, being meticulously careful that his lips<sup>2</sup> do not touch the vessel itself.

<sup>1</sup> A Brāhman is also debarred from smoking.

<sup>2</sup> Tea is generally taken by itself, not at meal-times, and not with food cooked in the house. It may be drunk from a cup which the lips may touch. It is not necessary to bathe or go through any ritual before drinking tea.



Each diner is also extremely careful that no morsel from his own plate falls on any one else's and vice versa, as such an accident would defile him. It is for this reason that they sit so far apart (more than a foot at the very least) from each other.

We noticed a family resemblance in the way Hindus and English both say grace before meals. Another interesting point in common is the care they take that no salt shall be spilt between two diners; if it were spilt, they believe, as we do, that quarrels and enmity would arise between the two. To avoid this, they never help their neighbour to salt, but very carefully pass him the salt-cellar to help himself. Perhaps this dislike to spilt salt points back to the long-ago time when in the same home they and we were taught at the same board 'to behave mannerly at table'.

At the end of the meal rice is again served, but this time not with the clarified butter, but with milk in some form or other, very likely a sort of rice pudding (*dūdha-pāka*). Some of this rice must be left on the dish, and some of it put on the ground.

(All the other rice that had clarified butter in it must be completely consumed.)

At the close the diner takes water in his right hand, pours half of it from near his thumb on to the ground, saying: 'You are a cover of nectar to this (food)', and then drinks the rest of the water.

He ought to wash his hands and his feet at the completion of the meal, and should also throw rice to the crows, but very often these things are omitted.

Servants, or the women of the house, replaster the ground, and then the women dine, the senior lady ('She-who-must-be-obeyed') sitting in the senior gentleman's place.

After the midday meal the leisured retired gentlemen of the house sleep, lying on their left sides to promote digestion, whilst the younger members go to office or school.

If the older gentlemen are very devout, they engage in

Svādhyāya before going to sleep, reading the Veda (probably the Yajur-veda) for an hour.

At twilight evening Sandhyā is performed, and afterwards the worshipper goes to the temple.

About eight o'clock he is ready to take his evening meal, for this cannot be taken whilst the sun is setting, or in the twilight, but the diner must wait till the lamps are lit.<sup>1</sup>

When the lamps are brought into the room, all the junior members bow to the senior members, sometimes saying: 'O, God, lead me from darkness to light (i.e. from ignorance to knowledge), from falsehood to truth'.

This rite is performed more ceremonially if a ruler be present. The writer will never forget the first time she saw this pretty little rite. Her husband and she were touring in a native State, and the splendid old Kāthiāwār chief—a Rājput of the old type—was calling on them at their tent, when the lamps were brought in, and instantly his whole retinue did obeisance to him, whilst he explained the quaint custom to her.

There is a reference to a similar Christian custom in one of Moira O'Neill's songs, 'The Grace for Light'.

The first lamp to be lit is one filled with clarified butter, which is put before the tutelary deity (*Iṣṭadeva*), and then kerosene or other lamps are brought in for mortal use.

Not only must Brāhmins wait for the lamps, but very often they cannot dine at all. For instance, they can take no meal on the day of an eclipse. (If the sun or moon sets during an eclipse, they must fast the next day also.) If a death occurs in a house near by, they must not dine till the corpse has been carried away, even if the dead person belonged to another caste.

The scrupulous care that Brāhmins exercise about food, and the caste rules that surround it, are well known, but it is not always understood that it is *cooked* food they treat with such especial care.

<sup>1</sup> A Jaina, on the other hand, cannot dine after the lamps are lit, for fear of destroying life.

Clarified butter, uncooked grain, and vegetables they can buy in the market from Baniās or Muḥammadans, but once such food has been cooked, it becomes Brahmā, and so must be treated with sacramental care.

For instance, if Brāhman want to go on a picnic, they either take uncooked food with them and cook it at the picnic place, or else they content themselves with fruit, or with milk-sweets, and other sweets made without water, which they can buy at a Brāhman shop in the bazaar. If they have to take cooked food from one place to another, water is sprinkled along the road in front of the carrier.

But if water can avail to purify, it is also through water that caste defilement arises most easily ; so one can sometimes persuade a Brāhman to accept medicine, such as quinine, in a powder, who would hesitate to take it in fluid form.

During dinner they are most careful not to drink from one another's water-vessels. Supposing some one who was very fussy were to do so by mistake, he might confess to his guru and perform penance by giving a cow (i.e. five rupees) to a Brāhman and repeating the Gāyatrī one hundred and eight times. (As with the Jaina, so with the Brāhman, no absolution is given after confession. The penance is laid down, and it is left to the penitent to do it or not.)

Water from a pipe is not so defiling as water from the vessel of some one belonging to another caste. Of course, when drinking from the tap, they let the water stream straight into their mouths, being careful not to touch the tap with their lips.

When the writer and her husband have dined with high-caste friends, all the diners have sat at separate tables, and care has been taken that these did not stand on the same carpet, so that there should be no apparent connexion or link between them.

The food served during the evening meal is very much the same as that eaten at breakfast, though less elaborate.

A Brāhman family, except on a fast or a festival, generally retires about ten.

Before getting into bed, a Brāhman often repeats some favourite hymns or verses, that the day may close with the sound of sacred words.

*A Woman's Day.*

In an ordinary Brāhman household the wife gets up about four a.m. to grind. This done, she sweeps the house, brushing the dust outside the courtyard door, where the Sweeper may come and fetch it, for so unclean a being is not allowed to step inside the house itself; she then cleans the cooking-vessels with ashes and puts her bedding in the sun. Not till all this is finished does she bathe.

Bathing, in the case of a woman as of a man, is a religious rite, and is carried out with great ceremony. If the woman is bathing at home, she invokes the sacred rivers Ganges, Jamnā, and Sarasvatī to take up their abode in the water which she is going to pour over her. Then she takes some water in her hand, and, mentioning the day of the week, the day according to the moon, and the name of the month, she pours it on the ground, repeating a mantra as she does so. She bathes by pouring water over herself. Whether she bathes in the river or at home, she should wear some clothes whilst bathing (though, as a matter of fact, she often does not wear clothes when bathing at home). She cleanses her teeth with the tooth-stick in the same way that a man does. If a junior member of the household, she is particular to do this in private.

An Indian lady washes her hair very frequently; but if she has not time to do this, she can render herself ceremonially pure from any ritual defilement she may have contracted by combing her hair. If loose hairs come out on the comb, she is as ritually pure as soon as she has thrown these away as if she had washed her hair, and may proceed to worship. Of course during the days that she is ceremonially impure she may not worship, any more than she may immediately after child-birth or a bereavement.

But if nothing prevents her, she first worships the sun. If

she has bathed at home, she puts on dry clothes (at the river she still wears her wet clothes) and proceeds to worship by throwing sandal-wood paste from her thumb and third finger towards the sun, repeating a mantra (vernacular, not Sanskrit) to it and doing four circumambulations towards it.

After worshipping the sun, she worships the tulasī plant, pouring water on it, marking it with sandal-wood and circumambulating it five times. (A tulasī plant is to be found in practically every Brāhman house.) She very often worships a pīpal tree in the same way with water, sandal-wood, and five circumambulations. Many of the old missionaries, such as the well-known James Smith of Delhi, planted these particular trees in shadeless places, relying on the fact that watering a pīpal is a religious duty.

If she had time, she would do more circumambulations, perhaps thirteen times, or one hundred and eight. But she still has the worship of the five gods in the house to perform. These may be kept in a special room, or, if the house be small, in a wall-shrine like a cupboard. On ordinary days she washes the gods with water, on great days with milk, curds, honey, clarified butter, and sugar. Next, she marks them with the auspicious mark with her third finger, and offers flowers, incense, lights, and rice, going through the ordinary fivefold worship.

Not until all this is completed does she wake her husband. She stands at a distance from his bed (after the first four or five months of married life they sleep in separate beds, and after the first child is born in separate rooms) and, doing obeisance to him with folded hands, rouses him by saying some such salutation as *Faya, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Faya*. (Brāhman women have often as much devotion for Kṛṣṇa as for Śiva.) Then, if he is going to bathe at home, she gets the water for his teeth-cleaning ready. If she be not pressed for time, when her husband rises she may worship the big toe<sup>1</sup> of his right

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare this with the worship offered to the occupant of the See of St. Peter's.

foot by bathing it, marking it with sandal-wood and offering incense, lights, rice, &c., just as if her husband were a god.

However strange this worship may seem to western eyes, there is often something very beautiful and almost sacramental in the whole relationship of an Indian wife to her husband. No one who has been honoured with the close friendship of an Indian lady can fail to realize that in a home where divorce is unknown, where children are longed for and treated, not as encumbrances, but as royal gifts from the gods, and where the wife's whole thought is how to please her husband, some exquisite, old-world graces bloom that are almost inevitably lost in the bustling western world.

The dark side of the picture is doubtless also true: the husband too often regards his wife as no relation, but merely the mother of his children, and those children are often utterly spoilt and undisciplined till the age of six or seven; and, of course, in a sheltered spot tyranny can be utterly merciless, especially if the young bride has been so unfortunate as to offend her mother-in-law, who may then deliberately try to make mischief between husband and wife. But as one compares the beautiful unselfish faces of the true home-makers with the bold eyes of some 'emancipated' Indian women who have not substituted for the old discipline of the home the discipline of Christ, one is sorry that something so rare and beautiful should be lost.

After worshipping her husband, the wife gets everything ready for him to use in worship, cleansing the vessels she herself had used when worshipping the gods.

Then, if she is the senior lady of the house, she cooks, preparing for breakfast the things her husband or her servant have brought from the bazaar, for an old-fashioned Brāhman lady would not herself go to the bazaar to shop.<sup>1</sup> If she has

<sup>1</sup> In Kāthiāwār, for instance, the women would not, if they could possibly help it, go to buy cloth, as they might in some other places; but under no circumstances would they buy vegetables or grain, any more than in England old-fashioned Black-country women would buy the Sunday joint.

become ceremonially impure, she bathes again before offering *Naivedya*. The men of the family breakfast, and, after waiting on them and replastering the ground, she and her children have their breakfast. Breakfast over, she replasters the hearth on which she has cooked and cleanses all the vessels. This done, she finds time, perhaps, to sleep a little during the great heat of the day, perhaps to sew. As a rule the women of the family do the mending, but most of the sewing-machine work is done by male tailors. (The writer once in her early days reduced a whole family of children to tears by presenting a toy sewing-machine to a girl instead of to a boy !)

The war has taught many Indian ladies to knit, but old-fashioned Brāhman gentlemen dislike wearing stockings themselves and would never permit their ladies to wear them. After sewing and resting, the wife very probably gets all ready for the evening meal, grinding again, if there is a large party to provide for, and cleansing the rice and the grain. Cleansing the rice and the grain is leisurely work, often occupying two or three hours, but it affords a fine time for domestic gossip.

When all is in readiness, she feels at leisure to enjoy herself, and most Indian ladies see their friends between the hours of four and six in the afternoon and pay visits of condolence or congratulation. In some parts of India (Kāthiāwār, for example) among Hindus it is only Rājput ladies of position who, strictly speaking, keep purdah, and even they often go out in a carriage, or after dark. Other Hindu women keep the letter of purdah by pulling their sārīs across their faces when they meet a man older than their husbands.

At sunset the women worship the household gods again, removing dead flowers, whose essence has by now been enjoyed by the gods. In the morning they offer them cooked food, but in the evenings it is generally uncooked food, such as sugar and milk, that is put before them. They then sometimes perform *ārati* (the ceremonial waving of a lamp), and afterwards allow the gods to sleep.

After worshipping the gods, the women cook the evening

meal, but this is a less elaborate business than the morning cooking. If a senior male member of the family be at leisure, he performs the evening worship, and the women only go to some temple. It is not usual to say good night to each other on retiring, the evening greeting, as we have already seen, being made when the lights are brought in; the women then often say to their elders: 'Jaya Śrī Kṛiṣṇa'.

The writer was reading these notes over to a charming Brāhman lady, who agreed to all that she had said, but added laughingly: 'Madam Sāhibā, that is the way, no doubt, that we ought to pay our reverence to our husbands, but we have not time nowadays. Look at us. My husband is a head master, but I am also a head mistress, and I have a lot of work to get through before school; so in the mornings all I have time to do is to stand at the bottom of his bed and say: "*Uṭha-Uṭha!*" (up you get!), and after that I am far too busy cooking for him to have any time to waste in worshipping him!'



## CHAPTER XI

### DAYS OF THE WEEK AND DAYS OF THE MONTH

DAYS OF THE WEEK: Monday — Tuesday — Wednesday — Thursday — Friday — Saturday — Hanumān worship — Sunday.

DAYS OF THE MONTH: Eleventh Days — Unlucky Days — The Twelfth — The Thirteenth — The Dark Fourteenth — Full-moon Night — The Moonless Night.

WE have studied the Brāhman's day, and, before going on to study the Brāhman sacred year, it will clear the ground if we notice their beliefs about the days of the week and the days of the month, since these days and dates frequently recur during the progress of the year.

#### *Days of the Week.*

Speaking religiously, Monday is the first day of the Brāhman week, though astronomically the week begins on Sunday.

*Monday* is the special day of the god Śiva, and some devout Brāhmins observe the day as a fast all their lives through, never eating till after sundown. Even if they do not do so for the rest of the year, almost every follower of Śiva observes the Mondays in Śrāvaṇa as fasts. In some of the States in Kāṭhīāwār Monday is observed as a day of rest.

There are certain rules governing shopping on Mondays that it is well for a thrifty householder to remember. Cloth must never be bought on Mondays, or it will not last; the proverb runs: 'Buy cloth on Monday, and it will soon wear out; buy cloth on Tuesday, and it will catch fire; buy cloth on Sunday, and you will never be able to afford to buy more'.

In the same way Mondays are bad days for buying shoes. The proverb here is: 'There is hostility between the moon and leather, so if any one buys shoes on the Moon-day and wears them, he is sure to be overtaken by some great misfortune'.

On the other hand, in another part of Kāthiāwār, the writer came across an entirely different set of shopping rules, and was assured that Monday was the best day to buy a *sārī* (the women's shawl-like overdress). Everywhere, however, they agreed that Monday was under the protection of the moon, and that therefore moonstones should be worn on that day. It is also an auspicious day for a bride to go to her own old home, for a birth, and for a wedding. No one should start out for a journey to the east on a Monday.

*Tuesday* cannot be called an auspicious day, for it is named after *Mangala*, the planet Mars, and, as he is the god of wars, he is a hard god.

If in any man's horoscope Mars is in the seventh mansion, that man will be unlucky in his married life; he will lose his first wife, or marry very late, or his wife will be an invalid. To avert all these matrimonial sorrows, he must either fast entirely every single Tuesday of his life, or else take only one meal, at which neither vegetable curry nor salt is served, but, fortunately for him, at which a *ladḍu* (the tennis-ball-like sweet so dear to the palate of a Brāhman) may be eaten. It must be so comforting to feel that, by eating the sweetmeat you most enjoy, you heroically save your poor wife from death and disease. Such a man should also be particular to wear a ring set with coral. (In those castes where widow remarriage is allowed, Tuesday and Sunday are the best days for the ceremonies.)

Tuesday is also an auspicious day for the *Simanta* ceremony, but no *śrāddha* should, if possible, be performed on that day of the week.

There is a good deal of correspondence between Tuesdays and Sundays: for instance, seeds should neither be sown on

Tuesday nor on Sunday, but the birth of a daughter on a Tuesday or a Sunday is lucky, and they are the best days on which to send a daughter to live in her father-in-law's house.

Women will not plaster the house on Tuesdays, and a man will neither shave on that day, nor become the disciple of an ascetic.

No one likes to travel towards the north on Tuesday, or to go to live in a new house, or to open a shop.

With regard to agriculture, no one should start ploughing on a Tuesday, since that is the day when mother-earth sits with her son Maṅgala on her lap, and so it would be both impolitic and impolite to disturb her.

*Wednesday*, the day belonging to Mercury, is an auspicious day, but nothing sorrowful should be done during it. Brothers and sisters should never part on Wednesdays, and though it is a good day for weddings, the bride must not leave her father's house on that day, nor ever afterwards, if she has been staying at her old home, may she choose Wednesday to return to her husband.

It is a happy thing if a boy is born on this day, but it makes an unhappy birthday for a girl. There is a firm belief that anything done on Wednesdays bears double fruit, so that if a woman puts on a new dress or a new necklace for the first time then, she knows (Happy Thought for the Day!) that she will have another new one soon; and in the same way, it is the day of all others on which to buy or give away new clothes.

It is a good day for sowing seeds and starting to plough land, and for moving into a new house, but no wise woman plasters her house on Wednesday. If the new moon is first apparent on Wednesday, the whole month will be lucky; if there are five Wednesdays in a month, the price of foodstuffs will be steady. Talking of food, it is well to remember that the thing to eat on a Wednesday is green pulse.

As a rule, no one need fast on a Wednesday, for Mercury is

not a bad planet, and as it moves slowly with the sun, it does not need propitiating; but if in any year Mercury did not travel with the sun, there would be famine. However that may be, mortal travellers will do well not to start out towards the north on Wednesday. Indeed, so few Hindus travel at all on Wednesdays, that the trains are more comfortable and less crowded on that than on any other day.

As it is a lucky day, it is the one on which all litigants like to start a case in Court, and as every Hindu loves a law-case, this is an important point.

Wednesday is a good day as far as it goes, but the luckiest day in the week is *Thursday*. There is, however, a cautionary thought even for this auspicious day, for if a man washes his clothes, or has his hair cut, or his nails pared, or his face shaved, or his house plastered on a Thursday, he will be poor all his life. In fact, on Thursdays over-fastidiousness is the way to poverty.

It is quite all right if children are sent to school on Wednesdays, but it is better to send them on Thursdays, for its very name (*Guruvāra*) suggests guru, a preceptor. Another name for Thursday is *Bṛihaspativāra*, and Bṛihaspati was the guru of the gods.

Death ceremonies or lucky ceremonies may be performed equally well on Thursday, so it is a good date on which to perform the ceremony of *Śimanta*, or to invoke Rannā Devī (*Randalā Mātā*). This mother-goddess might also be happily summoned on Tuesday or Sunday, but Thursday is the best day.

Supposing Guru has a malign influence over any one, he need not really be worried: all that is necessary is to perform the very pleasant task of eating white food made with rice, clarified butter and sugar on Thursdays, and the planet is at once placated. Ordinary mortals are careful to eat their pulse unparched on this day. It is a good day for shopping, a good day to be born on, and a good day for a journey, if you are only careful not to go southward. But just now

the supreme importance of Thursday lies in the fact that it is the best of all days on which to conclude a Treaty of Peace.

The opinion about *Friday*, the day of *Śukra*, seems to fluctuate a good deal. It is not considered unlucky in Kāthiāwār, as it is in some parts of India, and in Gujarāt it is believed to be a day that removes anxieties; yet in both Kāthiāwār and Gujarāt old people dislike and suspect the day, and advise the young and 'biddable' not to begin any new undertaking on so unreliable a day, since nothing done on Friday ever brings forth fruit. No one should go west on Fridays, and all should eat parched gram, which is sometimes distributed amongst school children. It is a good day to buy land or trees, and auspicious for birthdays. Perhaps Friday owes its double character to the fact that there are two *Śukra*: one, Venus, is lucky, but the other *Śukra*, the one-eyed preceptor of the Brāhmans, is far from being an auspicious character.

And now with *Saturday* we come to a really bad day. It is Hanumān's day, for on that day Hanumān conquered Panotī, who represents the cruelty of the cruel planet Saturn (Śani).

If any one realizes that Saturn has a malign influence over him, he should eat only once on this day, and in the evening should offer oil, black pulse, and red lead to Hanumān, and flowers, especially *Arka*.

If a man is harassed and does not know what is the cause, he should consult an astrologer, who will tell him the reason and the remedy. Very likely he will say it is Śani, or Śani's evil influence Panotī, and will order the sufferer, besides performing the Saturday evening worship, to give black gifts, such as black pulse, black cloth, iron (that black metal), or a dark blue stone called Śani, to a Brāhman.

If Śani is in the fourth or the eighth mansion, his bad influence will affect a man for two years and a half only; but if it be in the first, second, or twelfth mansion, the evil will be felt for seven years and a half.

Saturday is bad for nearly everything. It is a bad day to

